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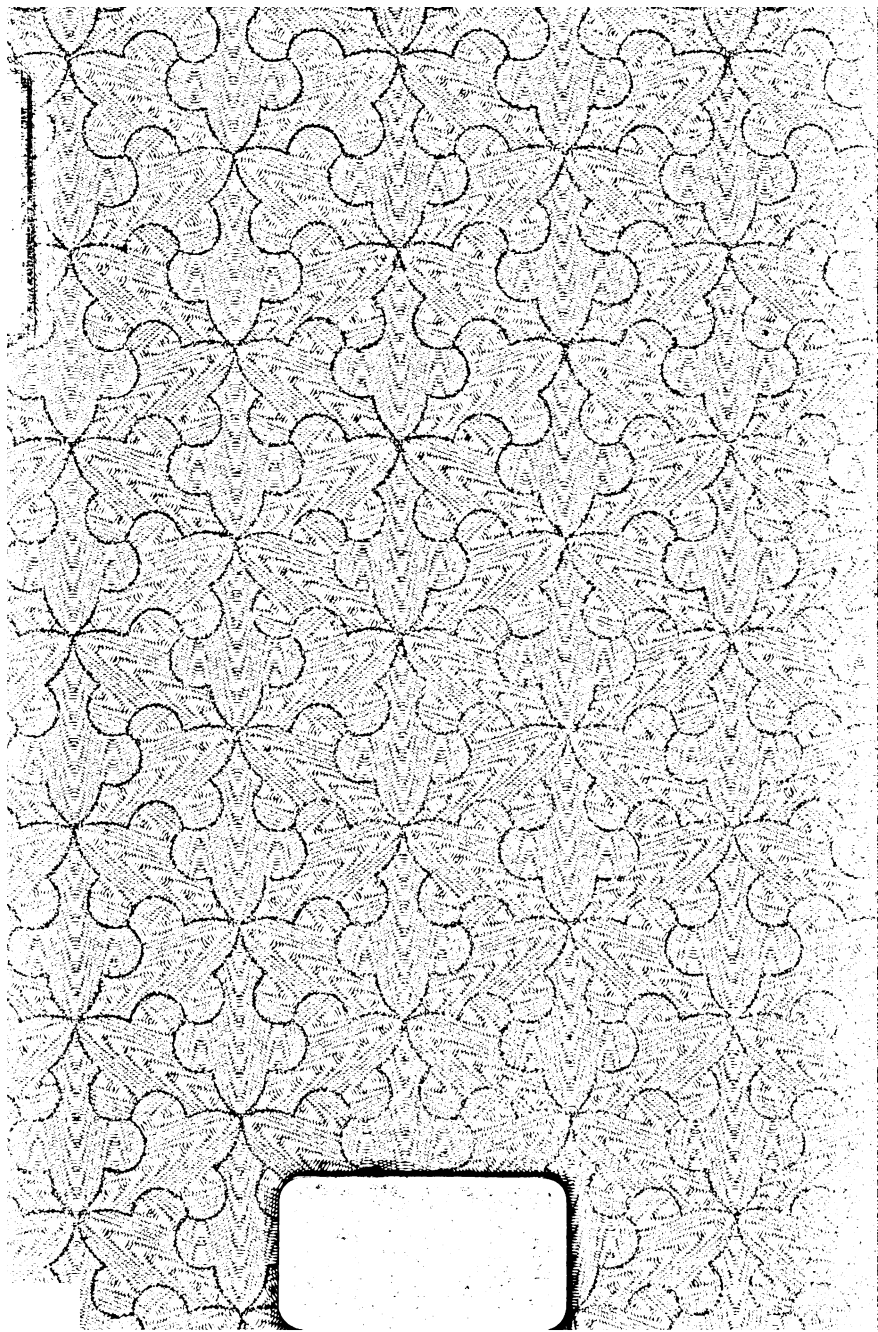
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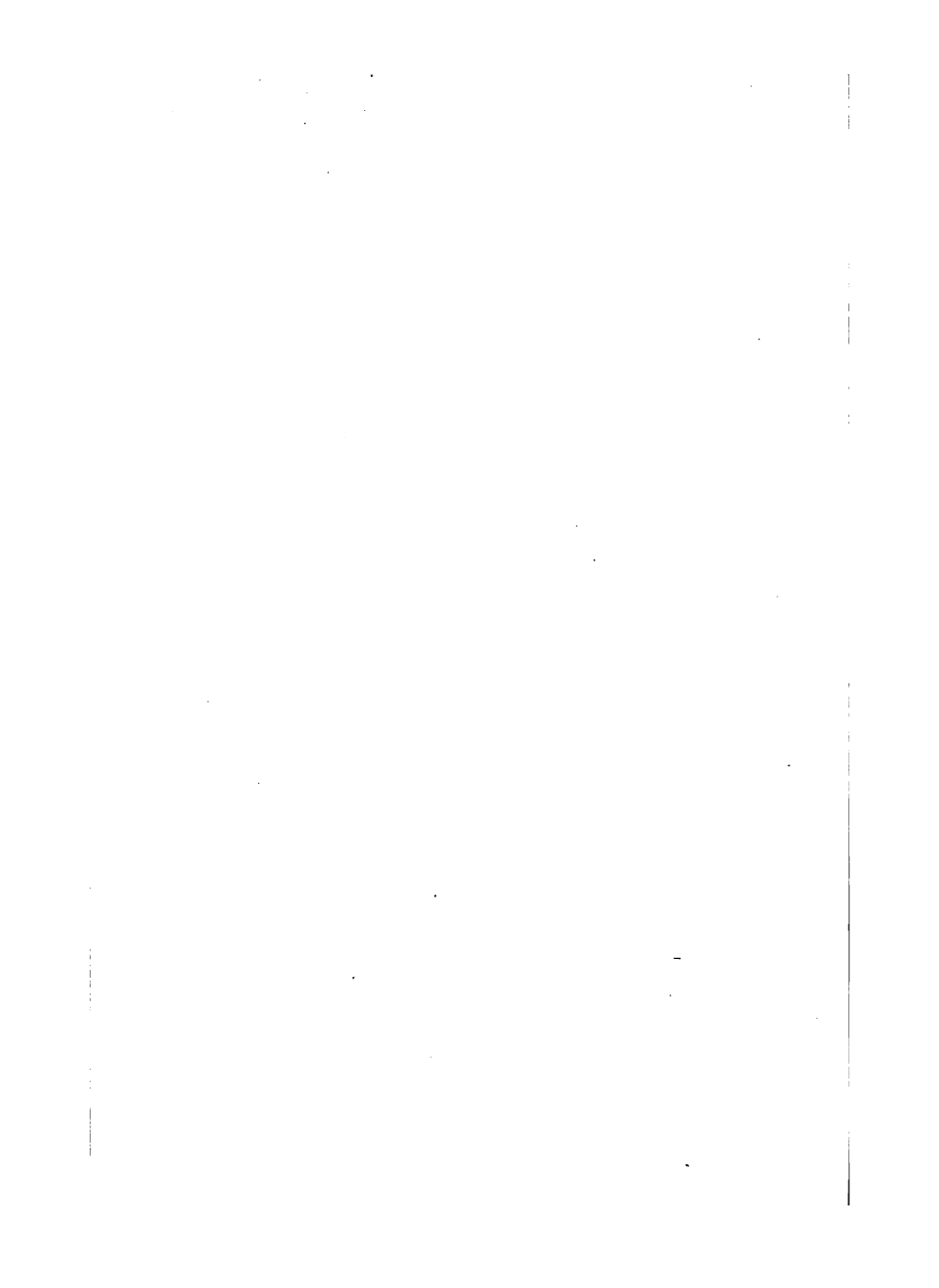
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COULEUR DE ROSE.

A Novel.

BY

ULICK J. BURKE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

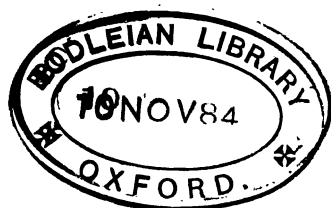
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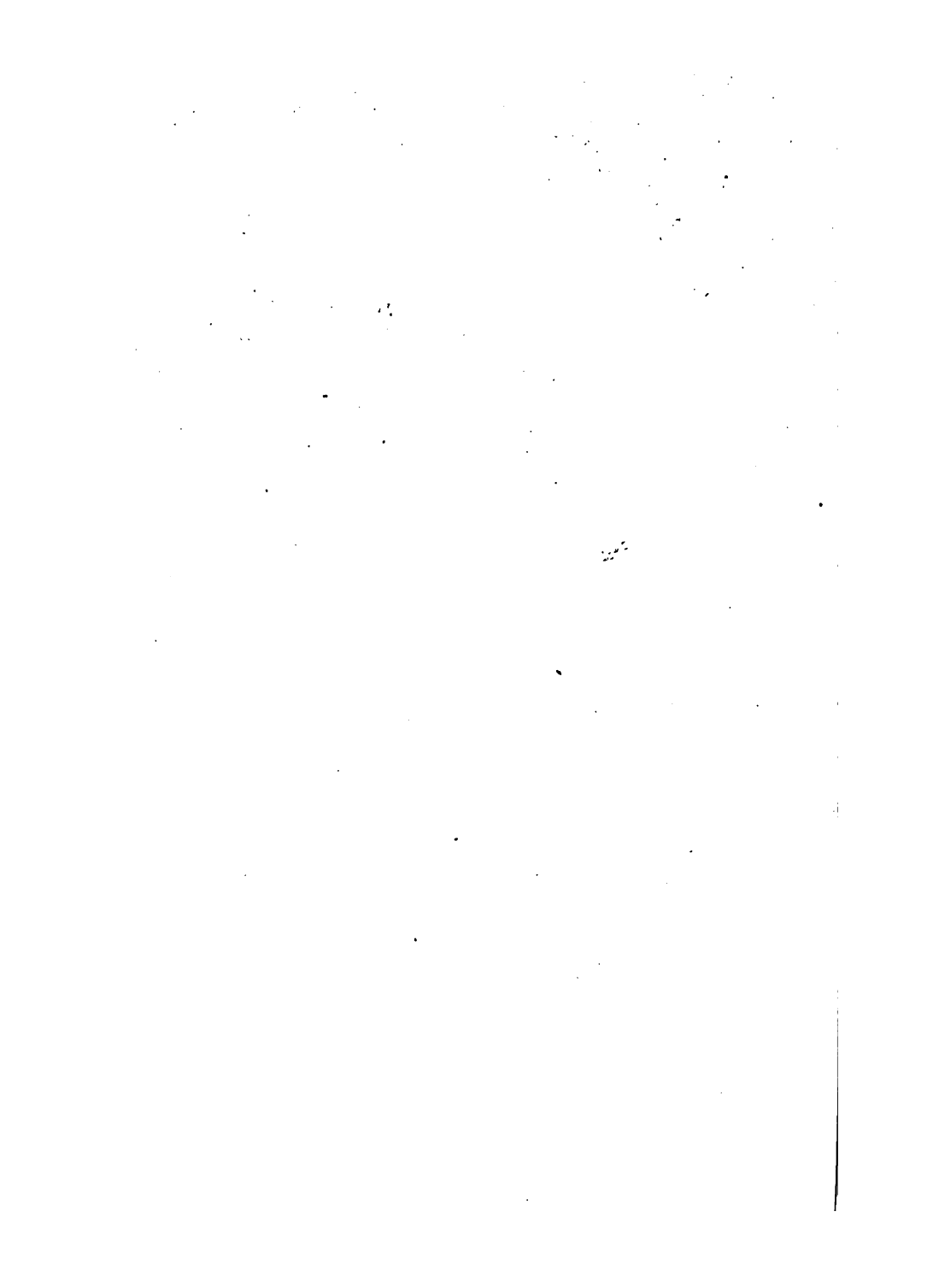
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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. 'THE HOUSE',	1
II. AT PYM PASTURES , . . .	40
III. ROSES	66
IV. AT CHARTERS.	109
V. PAINT-POTS	131
VI. THE GAY WORLD	161
VII. DOUBT	216



COULEUR DE ROSE.



CHAPTER I.

‘THE HOUSE.’

A WINTER evening at Oxford. Old Tom, the great bell of Christchurch, has just tolled out his nightly task of one hundred and one strokes, and the men of that famous college, shut in for the night, are no doubt pursuing their evening studies with that assiduity to which an ambition for honours and the peculiar monastic tone of the grey old quadrangles and cloisters are so favourable. The thoughtful stranger, passing through the quiet streets of the venerable city, may well picture to himself a lot of future bishops and chancellors in the colleges about him, busily vying with one another in mastering the first

step on their road to fame ; for the streets and lanes are nearly deserted, and the chiming quarters alone break the stillness of the place he has been taught to reverence as at once the nursery and the seat of learning.

Well, well ! youth is youth, and boys will be boys. It is when he has fought his fight in the troublous battle of life, and the clang of the scarce-ended struggle is yet sounding in his ears, when he is weary of the worries and sick with the sorrows of the sharp contest, when the bitterness of disappointment or the emptiness of gratification have made him cry from his heart, 'Vanity, vanity, all is vanity'—it is then that the repose of such a place as Oxford appeals to a man, and fills him with veneration for a calm life of learning for learning's sake ; not when the young blood is dancing through his veins, and youth and trust and hope bid him *carpe diem* in joy and song and action : for while the future is bright with grateful possibilities, how shall he value the semi-monastic rest that is offered him by the way ?

Let us knock at the Canterbury Gate, and bid the good porter or the one-armed messen-

ger tell us of the rooms of one Thomas Gaythorne, or of Cheriton Charters: both the young fellows are dear to us, and of both shall the patient reader find record in the pages of this tale.

Let us, however, shake off at once all our sentimental ideas about crumbling walls and future poets and statesmen; here inside the gates we find but little in harmony with such musings: the genius of the place is of another temper, just now at all events, and Diana has a decided, if temporary, advantage over poor Minerva. Here and there, through some wide-opened window, comes a snatch of a hunting-song, with a hearty if inharmonious chorus, whilst, in his sanctum on the ground-floor of No. 15, Peckwater Quad, the King of Scouts is brewing mulled claret as he alone can brew it, amidst a tumbled heap of scarlet coats, boots, and breeches, that appear to have freely robbed the landed proprietors of Oxfordshire of their soil.

The Heythrop hounds have had a run. Such a run as remains to be marked with a red letter in the annals of a hunt, and which men will talk over and refer to as 'that

run from Woodstock,' for many a year to come.

'The House,' as Christchurch men familiarly and affectionately denominate Wolsey's foundation, has been rather strongly represented in the field, and some, with the head-long enthusiasm of rash youth, have rushed to a quick fate, and, to relief of master and servants of the hunt, have galloped their two guineas' worth of hunter to an early standstill; and some few, some very few, have known when their single horse has had enough, and have pulled up with a view to other days. And some have parted company with their steeds, some almost with their heads, in crossing brook or wall; whilst only two of all the gay young set of galloping undergraduates who left Canterbury Gate in the morning have seen the whole thing from find to finish.

'How well young Gaythorne of Christchurch went!' some one says, as the little knot of men who have seen the stout fox die are slushing homewards through the dark lanes.

'Deed an' he did, right well; but so he

had ought, lookin' to the cattle he rides,' replies a hard-riding Oxfordshire farmer. 'So he had ought to on such horses, an' he had two of 'em out too. Give me Mr. Charters, now, for a horseman. You don't often see a young un come through a run on one horse, as he did. She've been a rare good mare, that of his—a rare good mare, but she've had her day. What say, sir? "Horses won't last for ever?"—deed an' 'em won't—not mine, leastways. Hold up, 'oss.'

An extra deep cart-rut had well-nigh cut shorter than his owner had even anticipated the career of gallant Dobbin, whom however we may leave to squelch home through the holding mud to his well-earned mash, whilst we get back to No. 15, Peckwater; on the second floor of which staircase, in one of those snug sets of rooms which are technically called 'attics,' we find the two young fellows of whom we are in search, arrayed in tweed and flannel, reposing in the roomiest of arm-chairs, and, need we say, going over again in desultory conversation the many incidents of the chase that have occurred to them during the day. And is any repose more solacing,

any sensual pleasure more luxurious than that, so to speak, 'afterglow' which in the evening rewards a long day of fatigue and excitement in the open air, especially when the digestion of a good dinner has fitly waited on appetite, and one of our choicest cigars, a spotted Cabana let us say, that draws to perfection, is between our lips, and one, if not more, of our choicest friends, of a mood similarly fashioned to our own, is seated opposite to us, ready to speak or to listen in silence, as lazy inclination may suggest!

*'Lætus in præsens animus, quod ultra est
Oderit curare,'*

as one or other of these scholars might have said, had not hunting, more than Horace, just now occupied their minds.

'You shoved along old three-legs, or whatever you call her, right well to-day, Cherry,' Tom Gaythorne does say instead. 'Poor old thing, I didn't think she had so much gallop left in her.'

'Poor old Cork-leg! She takes some handling though, now, Tom,' says Cheriton Charters, gazing through a more than ordi-

narily dense cloud of tobacco-smoke into the fire, as though he detected there some representation of the deeds of daring wrought by his beloved old quadruped. 'She takes some handling now to keep her on her legs. Nobody knows what a funk bestrides the Cork-leg when I see a big drop before me ; and though I gave you fellows a lead over the water at Eynsham, I didn't think I could get pace enough out of her for it, and my poltroonery before was only equalled by my relief when we had a check immediately after in the fallow.'

'You rode the old screw very well indeed, Cherry, whether you funkcd or not, and I was right glad Brassey gave you the brush,' says Tom Gaythorne heartily, as he sweeps a vast avalanche of cigar ash off his smoking-jacket.

'Yes, I was rather proud at getting that brush ; but between ourselves, old chap, it was more due to Brassey's good-nature than my riding. I wasn't to the front at all, scarcely ; but he knew it was my last day this season—probably my last for many seasons. Dear old Cork-leg is too old for

much more galloping, and I have other fish to fry.'

Tom Gaythorne looks at his friend with a frown. 'You're talking a lot of nonsense, Cherry: you often do—generally do, in fact. You know perfectly well I will mount you whenever I have four legs fit to go; and if you weren't so superbly proud, and so idiotically shy of making use of your friends, you might have had one of my lot out to-day, and so have saved those weary old timbers of poor Rosinante.'

'I know you are the best pal a fellow ever had,' says Charters, with some feeling.

'Oh, I don't want to draw you for a sentiment, you know,' replies his friend. 'If you had horses, and I had none, you'd do as much for me—wouldn't he, Snob, eh?'

Snob, a well-bred fox-terrier, every inch a gentleman despite his name, wags his stump of a tail in reply, but has no notion of budging an inch from the particular patch of hearthrug, selected with much care and after many circlings, on which he reposes.

If a man may be known by his friends, the inanimate objects that occupy that relation to

him in his home are some clue to his character as well. Let us glance round, then, at some of the Lares and Penates that grace these rooms, and therefrom judge Cheriton Charters.

Three massive arm-chairs, deep in the seat and wide in the arm, face the fireplace, and are backed by a roomy sofa, and such a sturdy four-legged table as a man may sit on the edge of without fear of upsetting ; whilst about the room are other chairs, also of that robust type that defies the rudest treatment. A veteran glass, starred in the middle by some ill-aimed missile of former days, surmounts the mantel-shelf, but is nearly concealed by the many invitation notes, lists of lectures, and meets of hounds, smoky photographs of friends, etc., etc., that are stuck in its frame, and which denote that the owner is, at least, not without acquaintances. Of pictures on the old oak-panelled walls there are but few. The young fellow is not rich enough to buy good ones, and has too good a taste to tolerate the mediocre or the bad. There is a large water-colour drawing of Charters though, his father's seat, on one of the walls,

and opposite to this hangs an exceedingly clever caricature in chalk, executed by one of his friends, and representing himself on the particular mare of which mention has been made; and the portrait is by no means a bad one, in an exaggerated way; either of the white-legged chestnut or of her rider.

Whip-racks, foxes' masks and brushes, and a few tankards, trophies won on the river, fill in the vacant spaces on the walls; whilst a pair of foils, a broken single-stick, some boxing-gloves, and an I Zingari cricket-jacket litter the table and the well-cushioned seats in the window.

Taken altogether, the room has the appearance of being devoted principally to athletics; the table seems ready at any moment to glide away to a corner and make room for any ebullition of spirits that rampant youth may give vent to, and one would say the tenant of the place was an undergraduate of the somewhat boisterous, perhaps not uncommon type.

But in the little sanctum, some eight feet by six in area, the third *room* of these snug quarters, other tastes manifest themselves. Here the small table is littered with books

that are apparently in pretty constant use ; some that are read to meet the stern requirements of examination, some that are read for pleasure, others from curiosity and a love of vague research.

When first Cheriton came up to Oxford his tutor had some hopes for him ; he recognised an eagerness to listen, a quickness in grasping any new standpoint of learning his lectures might afford him ; he thought that here at last was one who would relieve the irksome labour of dinning knowledge into deafened ears, who might possibly develop into a ripe scholar, and do the old college some credit in the schools. By-and-by he finds himself gradually undeceived and disappointed. The restless young mind will scarcely stay to master a subject thoroughly before it is working eagerly in some other channel.

'You will never make a scholar, old fellow, never,' he says to Charters. 'Superficiality is your bane here, and unless you can get over it, I fear you will find it your stumbling-block in after-life.'

What a litter of literature is here on the

table now ! English poetry and Latin prose, novels and biographies, Butler's 'Analogy' and Hallam's 'Middle Ages,' Paley's 'Evidences,' a Greek play or two, and a Bible ; whilst by the window stands an easel, on which rests a half-finished sketch in oils of Snob, his friend's dog, bold, even brilliant in dash and spirit, but careless and slovenly in execution, an epitome, we fear, of the usual work of its author. If only he were to take up painting in earnest ; if his bread, for instance, depended on the efforts of his brush, many thought that Charters would develop into an artist of some power. But, meantime, as his bread does not so depend, his work on the canvas is of that sketchy, free-and-easy style for which an amateur's performances are usually conspicuous, and which is somewhat the characteristic of most of the pursuits of this impetuous youth.

If I am to stay dawdling about describing upholstery, however, and giving vague hints as to Charters's character and tastes through the medium of his somewhat indifferent painting, I fear I shall fail to interest you in the young man himself, or to coax you further

to peruse the recital of the wonderful adventures that are about to befall him.

Let us go back, then, to the two arm-chairs, and the smoke, and the hunting 'shop' which is being talked over the fire, or rather let us push on to the conversation more nearly bearing on our tale which ere long takes its place.

For soon, when most of the tremendous leaps have been discussed, and the falls, and refusals, and checks, and findings, and what-not ; duly recorded—when all this, I say, has been gone over till nothing has been left further to say on the subject, there has come a marked silence over the proceedings, till presently Cheriton, who has been for the last quarter of an hour gazing affectionately at the portrait of a young lady in his photograph-book, propounds the following astounding question to his friend :

'Tom, old fellow, what do you think of marriage ?'

Thus Cheriton Charters, who musters barely more than one-and-twenty years, to his friend, whose experience of wedlock must probably have been culled principally from

the contemplation of his parents' felicity in that state. Not the less on that account, however, is he ready with an opinion.

'Marriage! Oh, it's a necessary evil, I suppose, Cherry. It's a kind of thing fellows seem to get let in for sooner or later; but a thing to be avoided as long as possible, I should say. Why do you ask? You are not contemplating connubial felicity yourself, are you?'

'Let's discuss the question in the abstract, Tom. I am not exactly alluding to myself. Let's take a supposititious case, that a fellow is fond of a girl, and she of him.'

'But you *are* alluding to yourself, old fellow,' replies astute Tom, 'and if you are the fellow who is fond of a girl, and she of you, I should say your dad is a figure that will have to be considered in the programme. I suppose Charters is entailed, but I don't know whether your father is very anxious you should want a separate establishment yet all the same. It's a queer thing how you fellows that are not free to choose in the matter are always wanting to run into matrimony, whilst I, who am my own master, so to

speaking, who ought, I suppose, to think about getting a mistress for Pym Pastures one of these days—I, I say, don't seem to see tying myself by the leg for years to come.'

'Yes, and you are just the very fellows who get spliced the soonest—you fellows who cry down matrimony. Oh! I know you. You are heart-whole, the sex has no fascination for you; let the loveliest try her wiles, you are protected by an *æs triplex* of indifference. Haven't you danced at the county balls with the fairest of the fair, haven't you lounged in the Park and seen all the beauties of the season go by, and yet come away unscathed? Yes, yes! and catch you making a fool of yourself with any woman! By-and-by perhaps, when you are five-and-thirty or forty, if somebody should turn up of surpassing beauty, of unexceptionable connections, and with a great dowry, you may give it a thought. That's the way you fellows talk; and then in a month's time Amarynthe one day fascinates you. Amarynthe, whose face is her fortune, and that no great one either, and whose relations are decidedly dowdy. Life without Amarynthe is dis-

covered to be hardly worth having, and so in six weeks' time there are grey horses and white favours at Laburnum Villa, and despite all your selfish philosophy and stoical indifference to the sex, you find there are nobler things in life than the toys you have had to give up, and greater happiness even in the prose of matrimony than in the poetry of bachelorhood.'

Gaythorne laughed.

'What a rum beggar you are, Cherry! Amarynthe has already managed to fascinate you manifestly, or you wouldn't let off such a prodigious oration in her favour. Who is the fair one?' he says, as he gets up and glances over his friend's shoulder at the open photograph-book.

Now there was nothing especially striking in the photograph in question, and I am not going to trouble my readers with an elaborate description of the personal advantages of the lady represented. She appeared to be standing in the foreground of the usual lake scenery that adjoins the studio of the country photographic artist, and that man of taste and culture had manifestly done his best,

both by the posing of his subject, even to her very finger-tips, and by an earnest invitation to her to look 'pleasant,' and to smile as though her best friend were just coming into the room, or rather down yonder mount, to produce at least an effective portrait. The result, it is true, was not very happy, the limbs having the appearance of belonging to a lay figure, and the smile of welcome to the coming loved one degenerating into a facial contortion that at best could only be described as a grin. Like or not like, however, the portrait appeared to have some fascination for young Charters; and it may be, that being well acquainted with the original, he was able, so to speak, to read between the lines, and to see Lucy Gaythorne in the picture before him, despite the well-meant efforts of the photographer to obliterate all her characteristics.

Tom Gaythorne laughed at first when he discovered Amarynthe to be his own sister.

'Oh, you've got that ghastly map of Lucy, have you, Cherry,' he said. 'I wonder you keep it. It's not fair to her that it should

go anywhere beyond a radius of two miles from home.'

Then he turned away and lit another cigar, and was silent for a time, pondering many things in his mind.

Tom Gaythorne was a young fellow whose way was to go straight to the point when he had anything to say, without any false delicacy or care for the corns that might possibly be made to throb by his utterances.

'That won't do, you know, Cherry,' he said, looking down at his friend whilst he himself leant back against the mantel-shelf, and when his mind had grasped some of the leading points of the position. 'That won't do, old fellow,' he repeated, when his friend made no reply to his remark.

'What won't do?' asked Charters, knowing, it may be, very well to what Gaythorne alluded, but with a perhaps not unnatural desire to define more accurately the issue between them.

'Well, Cherry, you know what I mean well enough,' says Tom, straightforwardly; 'you were talking of marriage just now—marriage in the abstract, you called it, but

you were alluding to yourself, and looking at Lucy’s photograph. I may as well say at once, even at the risk of offending you, that if your Amarynthe is my sister Lucy, it will be very long indeed before the sequel of white favours and grey horses, which you sketched so graphically, takes place at Pym Pastures. As I said before, it won’t do.’

‘Well, you are certainly explicit, Tom.’

‘I meant to be so. In my opinion it is always best to be so.’

‘And not complimentary.’

‘Compliments, Cherry! You and I know each other too well to bandy compliments.’

‘And why, may I ask, are you so very positive that I and—that is, that *it* won’t do.’

‘Look here, Cherry,’ says Tom, patting his friend kindly on the shoulder, in order perhaps to apologise in action for the words which he felt were something unwelcome and unfriendly. ‘Look here, Cherry. You are an old friend—perhaps the oldest and most valued that I have. I would do almost anything for you, as you know. I don’t mean in the way of the ordinary calls of friendship and good-fellowship—anybody would do

that for you ; but I mean I'd stand by you, and put myself out, and do you any turn I could, cost me what it might, in reason. But, look you, Lucy is my sister, my only sister, almost the only relation, in fact, that I have about me in the world. I am bound in mere duty, if not by love, to guard and shield her welfare, to be mother, father, everything to her that I can.'

'And therefore you must guard her from me !' puffed out Cheriton with his cigar between his lips.

'Yes, old fellow, I must guard her from you, if you will put it so. She's too young yet, I should have thought, to need much caution about her poor little heart. But I have to take care, at all events, it is not given to anybody and everybody who may take a fancy to her. No offence to you, Cherry, you know ; but you are not at all an eligible young man.'

Poor Charters ! he had had his little dream, from which these matter-of-fact words made a somewhat rude awakening. He loved his friend, and he loved still more his friend's sister. What nicer, what happier, than that

he should become his friend's brother-in-law ? How desirable and fitting it all seemed, viewed by the light of his own young imagination ! And now he is told that he is not good enough for the young lady.

'Thank you, Tom,' he said, drawing himself up ; 'thank you for your valuation of me. I dare say I am not good enough for your sister, very likely I am not. I don't know who is. And perhaps I am not good enough for a Gaythorne ! I don't know, though. I am a Charters of Charters. I am not snob enough to brag about that ; and I dare say it's little enough to boast of anyway. Still, we have been tolerably respectable people for, at all events, a few centuries, and have married pretty well whom we liked, though none of us have ventured, hitherto, to aspire to the hand of a Gaythorne. Perhaps we have not had the chance ! What year was it that my people sold Pym Pastures to your grandfather ?'

'I don't know, Cherry boy ; and, what's more, I don't care two straws,' laughed Tom. 'I believe the good old gentleman paid for it all square ; that was the great point. It's

not your blood I was thinking of; I believe that to be so intensely blue, that our poor stuff is the merest ditch-water 'compared to it. But there are other things besides blood to be looked to in these sad, matter-of-fact days. Come, Cherry, I generally go pretty straight to the point, as you know; and not to mince matters, though I hate to say it, there isn't much left to keep Charters up on, is there?

'Don't spare me, Gaythorne; pray go on,' said Charters, fiercely.

'I want to spare you, old boy. You know I wouldn't say these kind of things if I were not obliged to. You know——'

'I do know,' said Charters, getting up from his chair and standing before the fire with raised coat-tails, in a posture dear to the Briton—'I do know, only too well; and I don't mind talking to you about it, Tom, or your saying anything about it to me, in the least. I am afraid you are right. I am afraid dear old Charters won't be with us many years more, unless something turns up to pull us round a bit. Now I have got older, I can see more how things are going,

and how they have been going. The dear old governor is such a sanguine fellow, there's no holding him. He jumps into the wildest speculations, convinced he is going to make a rapid fortune and set the estate on its legs again. And the worst of it is, he seems to learn nothing by experience. If these shaky speculations turn out badly, it is not because they were rotten *ab initio*, but because of some slight mishap that is not likely to occur again. He gets done by these City fellows somehow or another, I feel sure. He's no match for them ; they are on the spot, you see, and know the market and watch all the twists in the game, whilst he is draining and hunting and double-digging, and doing other bucolic matters down at Charters. I've had a letter from him only to-day. I don't understand it all, you know ; I don't know all these queer City terms : but something seems to have gone down that shouldn't, and something else has gone up that he has got out of, and all I can make out is, that, at all events, my dear parent has lost a lot more tin. And he writes in the lowest of spirits, poor fellow, and sees nothing for it but to sell the Black

Hill Farm, if not one or two of the other holdings. Ah! Tom, old fellow, if you knew how I grudge parting with any one clod that forms part of Charters! If you knew how I brood over the very possible contingency of the whole estate slipping away from us by degrees, you would feel for me! By Jove, fancy what it would be to live away from Charters altogether! Fancy a stranger doing the civil to strange guests in the dear old rooms! Fancy him—one of these very City speculators, as likely as not—cutting down the oaks and shooting the pheasants, perhaps even shooting the foxes, in the coverts! It sickens me to think of it.'

'Poor old Charters! Things are not so bad though as that, really, are they?' asked Gaythorne, more, perhaps, as a soothing speech to his friend than from conviction, for the true state of the case was tolerably well known about the county.

'I am afraid they are, Tom; or soon will be, at all events. Nothing, I expect, will stop the dad from thinking his ship is coming home one of these days in some wild, venturous speculation. Ah me! I fear the

decrepit old bark was never classed A 1 at Lloyd’s, and has had an ugly Plimsoll mark on her for some time, for somehow she has never come to port yet.’

‘ Then after all, Cherry, you’ll forgive me for saying “ It won’t do !” eh ?’

‘ Oh, I suppose so ; if nothing short of ten thousand a year and a deer-park is good enough for you, or rather for your sister. But I didn’t know you were such a worldly beggar as all that, Tom. I thought love and honour and good blood would have their weight with the sort of fellow I took you for.’

‘ Well, well,’ says Gaythorne, smiling, ‘ we are young yet, both of us, are we not ? And love and honour and good blood are all very well, you know, and necessary and that ; and, for that matter, have been known before now, out of a book at least, to go along with the comforting ten thousand and the conventional deer-park. But love and ancient lineage won’t pay the piper, Cherry. There’s the rub.’

‘ No ; but a stout heart and a good head and hard work will, though, Tom. You don’t

suppose, if there's a smash in the family, I am going to lie by and do nothing, do you? You don't suppose I wouldn't put my shoulder to the wheel in earnest, with such an inducement as a wife to work for? And let me tell you, money isn't everything, and happiness may be possible even to people who are not rich,' urged Charters.

'No doubt it may! There's the ostler at Follitt's, for instance, and the little chap who polishes up our top-boots: both of them have wives and families, and live, I expect, in rather queer quarters, and yet are as jolly and cheery as need be. But it depends somewhat on the disposition and early habits of the parties, doesn't it, Cherry? You are not very partial to economy yourself, and I think I see you and Lucy taking an ecstatic walk in the New Road, or at Peckham, let us say, previous to the debauch of a cold mutton sort of dinner, or eking out your five hundred a year in a blissful parsimony of wine, washing, and cigars! Lucy, too, of all people! Why, the little minx would spend your first year's earnings on her toilet, if you would let her; and, though she is barely eighteen, already.

has such a notion of what's what in a household, that poor old Cackle, the housekeeper at Pym, hardly dare look her in the face, if the establishment isn't smart, or the cooking not up to the mark. Love in a cottage would never do for her at any price, and she's too young to bother her head about anything of the sort yet; and in a year or two, if by that time you should happen not yet to be Lord Chancellor, or a bishop, or some big-wig or another, why Lucy will have to come out in London. Aunt Hester will take her out, and marry her to a duke, or some other big swell, I suppose' (Charters winced); 'and you by that time will have forgotten all about her, and will have given up your dream of love and bliss at Peckham Rye, or will have found that

"There are maidens in Scotland more beauteous by far,
That would fain be the bride of the young Lochinvar,"

as some bard or another has it. Come, Cherry, we are barely more than boys, you and I. Only the other day—what shall I say, two years ago, is it?—we were birched, both of us, for smoking at the

Brocas. It's early yet to be thinking of wives and perambulators, and teething, and vaccinations, and school-bills, isn't it?

'I suppose so,' said Charters, laughing, and shutting the photograph-book with a bang. 'I suppose so—you are a worldly, hard-hearted beggar, Tom, that's the fact. I offer a most unexceptionable match for your sister—a most excellent young man of good family and most unblamable parts, an old friend, and all the rest of it; and yet instead of giving me your sympathy with all the enthusiasm of youth and affection, you cry out on me that I am a detrimental pauper, and warn me "hands off," like the veriest old match-scheming mother in London.'

'I'll tell you what I will give you instead of my sympathy, old fellow,' said Gaythorne, as he put on his hat preparatory to taking his departure; 'I'll give you a mount on any horse I have fit to go for the next month, and you shall gallop all this nonsense out of your head. You are an excellent man in the pig-skin, however detrimental as a suitor. But there's eleven o'clock striking, and I'm an early bird, as you know, so good-night, and

may bad dreams and matrimony be both distant from you.’

‘Good-night, Tom, and the same to you, despite Amarynthe, of whom I doubt not I shall shortly hear,’ said Charters as he shut his oak behind his departing friend.

Then he took his candle into his little sanctum, and turned over the litter of books that were lying on the table, tossing them over one after the other, restlessly doubtful which subject to take up, and finally plunging headlong into the deep study of a Greek play. This he read steadily for an hour or so ; and then he threw down the book on to the floor, and gazed into the fire.

‘I don’t care how many children Medea killed, not a rap. She was a hag, and in these days would have been properly committed for murder, and I trust hanged,’ he exclaimed half aloud. ‘I wonder these old wiseacres up here give us that sort of stuff to read ! I don’t see how it is to help us along in after-life, and I, for my part, get more good from reading about honest Colonel Newcome, than all these ruffianly Greek criminals put together ; and I suppose some

thousand years hence fellows will be allowed to take up English classics in the schools, and be thought to do well in knowing something of Adam Bede and Ethel Newcome, instead of these discontented maunderings of demented Medea. Well, well! I suppose it's discipline in some shape or another. And I suppose Tom Gaythorne is right about Lucy. I don't suppose there is much left, as it is, in the family till. And alas! I fear he's right in saying "It won't do."

Then he gave himself up to thoughts very foreign to the subject of which he had been reading. No! it wouldn't do, perhaps; and yet how long had he half-dreamed it might?

'This is my house, and this my little wife.'

A small boy of ten had played years ago with a little dark-haired, blue-eyed maid of six or seven, in a great old-fashioned garden, and had conveyed stores of hoarded gingerbread and contraband gooseberries to the gardener's tool-house, and had commenced housekeeping there in anticipation of the day when they should both be old enough to have a real house, and a real butcher, and a

real carriage; and the little maid had promised over and over again to be constant to the small boy, and to marry him the very instant they were old enough.

Later on, and more dangerously, at full-blooded, impulsive nineteen, a young fellow with tails to his coat, emancipated from school and exulting in the new patent of manhood conferred by matriculation, stands on the brink of a rippling trout-stream, instructing a slight little fairy, some three years his junior, in the mystery and art of throwing a fly; and, as will happen in the course of that intricate and delicate inculcation, the hands of pupil and teacher are in frequent contact, thrilling or not, according to the state of the heart and feelings; and as it further happens in this case the right hand of the lady is without a glove, perhaps in order to better and more accurate instruction, but by reason, at all events, of the fact—alas! not unknown to her—that that absent garment is in the breast-pocket of her preceptor.

‘This is better than doing history and the use of the globes with Miss Hopkins, isn’t it, Lucy?’ says the young fellow, stretched on

the grass, and busily occupied in tying a fly of a new and startling pattern with a shred of his pupil's neck-ribbon round the flower of a dandelion.

'*Rather*,' replies she readily, with an apt grace of language that she had unconsciously caught from her brother, not, let us in justice say, from Miss Hopkins.

'And you like being out and about with a fellow in this sort of way?'

'When the fellow's in a good temper, yes.'

'Well, you'd better make the most of it, for, good temper or bad, you won't have many more chances of being with him.'

'No! You are not going away, are you?' she asks, with ingenuous concern in her voice.

'Oh, not just yet, you know—I didn't mean that exactly; but we are getting to be grown-up sort of folk now, and the old fogies won't let us go knocking about without a chaperon for you much longer. I know 'em. It wouldn't be much fun now if Miss Hopkins or your aunt Hester, for instance, were sitting primly by us here, listening to our con-

versation, would it, Lucy? And, by the way, I suppose I ought to be calling you Miss Gaythorne soon, and you talking to me as Mr. Charters? Sounds odd, though, doesn't it?

Lucy burst out laughing, and a good honest ringing laugh hers was always.

‘Fancy you and me doing the polite to each other!’

‘I say, Lucy,’ says Cheriton, after a pause.

‘Well, Mr. Charters, what now?’

‘Can you be serious for a minute?’

‘Serious! solemn, if you like.’

‘Well, look here. I don't want to say anything sentimental, you know, but I wish, that is, I wonder if——’

‘Go on, boy; what is it?’

‘Well, I wish you would let me call you Lucy always.’

‘Oh, by all means. I don't see anything serious in that.’

‘Ah! but I mean in another sort of way.’

‘What sort of way?’

‘When you were a little bit of a girl,

Lucy, you told me you would marry me one day, you know.'

'Did I? I must have been indeed a *very* little girl.'

'Well, never mind that; you said so all the same.'

'So I did. Dear, what a long time ago that all seems now! And we set up house in the tool-shed, didn't we? and made rice-puddings with chalk and water, and pitched into my dolls for being our naughty children. They always were naughty, I recollect; it used to be so much greater fun—dear, dear, yes! Fancy your recollecting that! Why, it must have been ages and ages ago!'

Was it not Voltaire who said that 'however long we live, the first twenty years are always the longest half of our life'?

'Of course I recollect it, Lucy,' Cherry goes on, putting down the monster he is creating, and looking longingly and lovingly at the dainty little girl standing beside him. 'Of course I recollect it; I think I remember nearly everything you have done and said.'

'Indeed, I sincerely hope you do nothing of the kind, Cheriton—that is, Mr. Charters.'

said she with another laugh. ‘You must have a rare collection of wise saws, if you do.’

‘I thought you said you would be serious, Lucy.’

‘So I wish to be, there!’

‘Well now, won’t you renew your promise, and set up house really with me one day?’

‘What! in the tool-shed?’ asked Lucy, laughingly, but turning away nevertheless to conceal the crimson that flooded all her pretty face.

‘I wish you wouldn’t always laugh at a fellow,’ said Charters, indignantly. ‘If you want to play, say so; if not, why can’t you give me a straightforward answer to a simple question?’

‘Simple question, indeed! I call it a very serious question. I was sixteen last birthday, and here I am being asked already to take up housekeeping in—in a tool-shed! And what are we to keep house on, may I ask? Aunt Hester lets me have one pound a month to buy gloves, etc., with; and it’s all I can do, I can tell you, to make ends meet as it is. What have you got, I wonder?’

‘ Well, you will make fun out of me when I want to be serious, so I suppose it’s no use talking.’

‘ Nay, Cheriton, I am quite serious.’

‘ Well, I have only three hundred a year now, but——’

‘ Oh, only three hundred a year. My dear Cheriton, we should be beggars ; let me see, how should we manage ? One hundred each for dress, and one hundred for butchers and bakers. Then, by the way, there’s the rent—I don’t understand these things, but I know I’ve heard Aunt Hester say that marriage on less than twelve hundred a year is mere beggary. We shall have to give up the shed for a time, I fear, Cheriton ; I couldn’t do it, you know. I am not the sort of young person who could look after the pudding-making, like Mrs. Jones, the curate’s wife, or see to the washing, and so on. When I marry I mean to ask my young man at once how many carriages I am to have—I know I shouldn’t be happy without ’em. No, sir !’ with a little saucy curtsey—‘ No, sir ; I am afraid I must decline your offer for the present.’

Cheriton was silent, half disposed to laugh, half disposed to be sulky at the contumacious way in which what he had intended in all sober seriousness was received.

'I don't mean now, of course, Lucy; I mean if you could make me happy by saying you'll stick to me for a few years, you know, and not forget a fellow, and throw him over for somebody else directly you come out,' he said feelingly.

'Don't be a goose, there's a dear boy,' said Lucy, touching him comically on the tip of his nose with her rod, and, as it is not easy to be serious and sentimental when so tickled on the nose, Cheriton burst into a good laugh, in which his companion joined.

'All the same, laugh or not, fun or not fun, Lucy, I will have my say,' he said presently, 'and I will tell you that you are more to me than all the world, that you know as well as I do how——'

'Hurrah! here's a rise, Cherry, at last, and I think I've hooked him!' exclaimed Lucy, who even at the comparatively tender age of sixteen had sufficient worldly wisdom and address to nip in the bud this symptom of

returning sentiment and impending proposal.

And so the colloquy ended for the time, at all events, and the trout was duly landed, and Miss Hopkins fortuitously arrived, and escorted her young charge home, and Cheriton went trudging back across the fields to Charters, flogging the thistles with his stick, and vowing a life-long constancy to his love; and even Lucy, despite her merri-ment by the stream, even she could not help dreaming now and then. pleasurably of the sunburnt face, the wavy hair, and the depth of love and admiration for herself in the honest grey eyes, even though she was but sixteen. For youth is passionate, and love is strong, and the heart of the maiden unfolds before it, so the poets tell us, even as the petals of the rose-bud uncurl under the genial influence of the sunbeams.

On these grave incidents in his past career—or on some of them at all events, for how indeed could he know what sentimental musings had passed through the mind of Miss Gaythorne?—on these incidents, I say, Cheriton Charters pondered somewhat

gloomily for a long time over the fire ere he retired to rest.

Then eventually he roused himself up, and, so to speak, pulled himself together.

‘I am afraid you are a bit of an ass, Master Cheriton,’ he said, as he tumbled into bed; ‘you’ve only got one horse to get through life’s run on, and that one rather a screw, and the sooner you recognise that fact the better.’

With which sentiment of resignation he gave himself to oblivion of the cares of the world in slumber.

CHAPTER II.

AT PYM PASTURES.

‘Whene’er one takes one’s walks abroad
How many poor one sees!’

THAT is so true! and yet also ‘how many rich!’ Oh! that Lady’s Mile of silk and satin, of Worth and Poole, of coronets and thoroughbred horses in Hyde Park! How pale Envy stalks about amongst the less favoured, and bids them be mindful of their own dusty boots and cotton gloves, their weary walk and otherwise dingy lot, as they contemplate the glitter around them! Or again, those cool, shady homes of merry England, where the cattle are browsing lazily in the pastures, or luxuriously lashing their only cares from their flanks in the pool! The fields of golden grain or fresh-smelling

hay, with the gabled mansion or the quiet homestead half-hidden amongst the oaks! How we envy John Springwheat his dun cob and his pastoral existence, as we trundle citywards in a railway carriage to care and smoke, and pale faces, and settling-day!

Ah, well, let us allow that it is 'a queer, queer world,' as your dyspeptic malcontent is ever sighing; but, after all, it is not with us as with the currants of song:

'Higgledy, piggedy, here we lie,
Pulled and picked, and put in a pie.'

Our lot, if it seem to have more of the drab and less of the rose-colour of our neighbours, is yet part of a purpose; we are but a 'purblind race of miserable men,' and cannot see the *atra cura* of unpaid bills that sits behind the saddle of the equestrian, nor reck of pleuro-pneumonia, wire-worm, overstocked market, and suchlike worries that share even the dun cob with honest Springwheat.

All in the merry, merry month of May, the small panes of the windows at Pym Pastures are laughing in the morning sun, peeping out from amongst the Virginian creeper and

honeysuckle that tumble all about the bulging oriels, and twinkling merrily from the old red gables that rise above the pea-green foliage of joyous spring. The smooth-shorn lawns slope gaily down to the trout-stream that intersects them, the blackbirds and thrushes are bursting forth in exultant song, the trout are rising at the unwary fly; and let us freely own that, all philosophy about equality of happiness to the contrary notwithstanding, Lucy Gaythorne, in a cool white dress, opening her letters in the breakfast-room at Pym Pastures, has at least a temporary advantage over the worn citizen and the unwary fly.

Some introduction of Lucy Gaythorne is perhaps necessary, however; some striking up of the band or other triumphant disturbance, before she is ushered on to these scenes where she is to play so important a part.

‘Let us speak of a man as we find him.’

And here is my heroine standing with her letters in her hands, and making, unconsciously, a pleasing piece of composition, a long white line of lithe young womanhood, against the faded blue hangings of the break-

fast-room window. The graceful figure is in repose, but there is youth and strength and subdued activity, not languor, in every curve of it. The dress is partially looped up, for she is but just come in from an early visit to her garden, and the slight, arched foot, which is just visible beneath, gives a little stamp of impatience as some passage in her letter apparently disturbs her equanimity.

‘By Jove, how well that girl would dance!’ a stranger had once remarked of her, as he watched her at lawn-tennis. And the expression, if inornate, was, perhaps, not inapt to describe the almost muscular grace that characterised her every movement.

By-and-by the letter that she is reading is laid aside for another, and a quick light of pleasure gleams for a moment over her features as she glances at the handwriting on the envelope.

I have spoken of her as a child, as having dark hair and blue eyes merely; but now that some two or three years have passed since the events recorded in the last chapter; now that she has grown from a schoolroom young lady of sixteen into the importance of an

emancipated being who owes no allegiance to Miss Hopkins ; now that her mind has somewhat expanded, and developed sympathies and tastes beyond the feats of the black retriever puppy, or the affectionate precocity of her canaries ; now that her beauty is a topic beyond the radius of her native village, and she is beginning to feel of more importance in the world ; in a word, now that she has come out, it behoves me to bring more prominently to your notice the dark hair, fastened closely on the small shapely head, and the long, sweeping lashes that shade the brilliancy, and give intensity to the blue of her wondrous eyes. Do they yet know their power, those glorious orbs of almost violet blue ? Do they know their deadly effect when they meet for a moment the expectant gaze of sentimental and susceptible youth ? Do they know their melting force when the long lashes droop over them, and half conceal, yet half suggest, their wealth of expression ? Or do they play havoc right and left, unmercifully and unconsciously, smashing hearts, creating heartburnings, envyings, jealousies, despairs, doing on all sides haphazard mis-

chiefs, like the traditional and irresponsible bull amongst the china ?

Alas ! alas ! Happy innocence and unsophisticated youth ! The poets have sung, and age and experience and philosophy have all echoed, the pæans of that guileless state. And yet are there not mirrors ? and we, who are dry, and matter-of-fact, and prosy, shall we believe that *Araminta*, who has beautiful eyes and rather a well-shaped mouth, has not taken note of these advantages, or that she uses her glass merely for the correct parting of her hair ? Or that the youthful *Lydia*, who is otherwise lovely, does not deplore the redness of her nose and the slight, yet growing, tendency to baldness which her faithful reflector invariably points out to her ? And though we would have *Araminta* and *Lydia* ingenuous and unconceited, and free from wiles ; and though we are liable to be wounded in our too tender hearts sometimes by the most untrained, the most unconscious young fair, yet, for all that, if the careless charm of a bread-and-butter innocence be absent, and past and gone for ever, me ! me ! we have known—who has not—the deadly fascination

of a well-managed eye, glancing destruction, let us say, from the rim of an adjusted fan, or drooping in half-conscious accord to some murmured communication of a touching and poetic nature ?

Let it not, however, be inferred from the above sentiments that Lucy Gaythorne was inordinately conscious of the beauty and of the power of her great blue eyes ; that she ever condescended to ogle or to cast languishing glances at the youth of her acquaintance ; or, indeed, that she was vain and frivolous enough to attach undue importance to her personal advantages in any way ; but now that she had arrived at woman's estate, and had come out at the county ball, and stayed on visits at this and that country house, and, in fact, had spent a year or so in such provincial dissipation as her position in her county offered, she had become in that time a young woman, as may be supposed, of some experience in the ways of the world ; she had met many men, and heard many things, even if she had not visited many cities ; and the men had been apt to say this and to imply that compliment in a fashion more or less clumsy,

and had sought after her, and sighed after her, and danced with her, with so much eagerness, but with so much jealousy and vying with each other, that it was not in human nature that she should long remain unaware of the possession of attractions at least greater than those of other young ladies, for whose society young Rusticus would never have given up part of a day's hunting, as he had been known to do for the sake of a quiet ride with Miss Gaythorne, and whom the cavalry officers quartered at Mudchester, and other planets of the local ball-rooms, would leave pressing their neglected shoulder-blades against the walls, whilst they crowded and clamoured, and watched and waited, in hopes of being allowed to tread a measure with herself.

In truth, she was very lovely, and was not prudishly unaware of the fact; but she had sufficient ballast in her character to enable her to carry her beauty with unobtrusive grace, even though ladies who had suffered desertion in her favour had been known occasionally to assert to the contrary, putting their heads together and agreeing, with much

mutual consolation, that Miss Gaythorne was not so *very* pretty after all ; that Captain De Holster and young Arthur Broadacres were such soft-hearted, weak-headed young men, that they would run after any new face ; and so on, and so on. For in life, as at the opera or in the Greek play, there is a chorus also, which is constantly coming forward to the footlights, as it were, and croaking out its views on the situation ; and my readers, who have watched the world's comedy, may easily figure to themselves a troupe of worthy people, of sentiments superior to their personal attractions perhaps, conspiring together to deprecate Miss Gaythorne's brilliant successes on the stage of life, and to deplore the frivolity of the age and the vanity of woman !

And yet, despite these worthy sentiments and observations, Lucy continues to bring down the house, if I may hold to the metaphor ; to be showered with bouquets ; to be the queen of the little world which she has entered only to take by storm, and to triumph over. And since so many are ready to throw themselves at her feet, now that she has appeared amongst them, who shall wonder that poor

Cheriton Charters had worshipped at her shrine, when he had the shrine all to himself almost, and when he was so constantly in a position to note new graces in his divinity, and to prostrate himself accordingly in a passion of devotion ?

But now two years at least have passed since we first found the amorous undergraduate musing on his mistress's photograph in his college rooms. And in those two years many things have happened besides the gradual development of Lucy's charms and the gathering of her admirers. That which the poor young fellow had so much dreaded has at last come to pass. On his father's death Cheriton Charters has ceased to be Charters of Charters, the exigencies of debts and duns compelling that every stick and stone of the old place should be sold away from the old family ; and now indeed a stranger, as in his gloomy forecast, does receive strange guests in the dear familiar rooms, and does shoot the pheasants—and otherwise exercises lordship over the old woods and the young plantations that equally owe their

origin to a Charters's hand ; and the young heir has gone sadly forth from the home of his fathers, sadly yet bravely, with his paint-pots and his easel and canvases, to fight his battle in the world with the tools and the talents which come readiest to his use. And Tom Gaythorne, too, has taken his degree, coming out not first in honours be it owned, and has left the gay quadrangle of Peckwater, and has travelled far afield and seen many men, many cities, and countries ; shooting bears in the Rocky Mountains, and sticking pigs in India ; dancing for a short season in the salons of Vienna, and jabbering indifferent French, also for a short season, amidst the gaieties of Paris ; and has now returned to lead the life of a country gentleman in his own county, with a seat on the bench of magistrates, and a string of very promising hunters in his stables.

And now I trust that that hurrying of my reader to and fro, from the records of the present to those of the past (so cruel, yet necessary, an infliction, as the sympathising novelist knows), may be, for the time at all events, abandoned, and that we may proceed

to the smoother recital of contemporaneous history.

To Lucy Gaythorne reading her letters at the open window suddenly appears our quondam friend, Snob, a sure sign that Tom himself is not far away; and in another minute a loud holloa brings Lucy out on to the lawn to see her brother, who is sitting a hot young chestnut horse in the paddock beyond the stream.

‘He’s a beast! Lucy,’ he exclaims, as he administers a sounding caress with his open hand on the animal’s silky shoulder. ‘He’s a beast, and won’t do for you at all—rears, and all the rest of it. I’ve had a long row with him in the matter of the leaping-bar. He wouldn’t have it. *I* would. And, as there was only you and breakfast to keep waiting, I kept him at it till he changed his august mind. Ring up the hot stuff now, like a good girl, and I’ll be in directly. I’ve been out since seven o’clock,’ he says, as he comes stamping into the breakfast-room, ‘with that brute of a horse of yours. I’ve been round to Hemming’s Hill farm, to see Govel. He wants a lot of things

done, of course ; he always does—a new roof to his barn, new paint here, new timber there, not to mention leave to cut down a lot of trees. Why can't the fellows be contented ? Where the money's to come from I don't know. He might almost as well pay no rent, for it nearly all seems to go in improvements about his holding. And then, people seem to think we landowners are as rich as Crœsus ; and if we don't spend our money accordingly, they write us down " screws".

' You are rather cross this morning, aren't you ? ' says Lucy, looking round the corner of the tea urn at him as he delivers his declamation.

' Yes, I am, very. So would you be, you little vixen, if you had been turned out in the grey of the morning to do horsebreaker for an exacting sister, and then been bled for a cool two hundred before breakfast into the bargain. I'm as hungry as an ogre, and as cross as two sticks, so if you want to get anything out of me, I warn you, young woman, it's a rare bad time to try it on.'

' But I do want to get something out of you.'

' Of course you do. You're as bad as

Govel every bit. However, fire away ; what is it now ? You want me to go dowagering you over to some insane gaiety in the way of a garden-party or a ball, I suppose ?

‘ It’s not that, Tom ; but I’ve had a letter from Aunt Hester.’

‘ With all my heart.’

‘ And she says she is coming back in about ten days.’

‘ I’m glad to hear it ; she’ll take you off my hands at all events.’

‘ Well, but I’ve had a letter from Cherry, too.’

‘ Have you ?’ and this small remark was made not in so playful a tone.

He was standing with his back to her, slicing away at a ham on the sideboard. Had she seen his face she would have observed a very slight frown to cross his brow.

Tom Gaythorne was as firm a friend as ever to his old schoolfellow—Cheriton Charters ; but his sentiments respecting any nearer relationship with himself through his sister were the same as those uttered in his college rooms, and it did not afford him any gratification that Cheriton and Lucy should correspond with each other.

‘Well?’ he said, after a pause, just sufficiently long to enable him to remove one broad slice from the ham.

‘Well what?’

‘Why, go on; what does he say?’

‘Oh, not much. He seems to be working away very hard in London.’

‘Have they made him an R.A. yet, or any big-wig of that sort, Lucy?’

‘He doesn’t say so.’

‘Poor old Cherry, I wish I could give him a job to put some tin into his pockets.’

‘Oh, Tom,’ says Lucy, eagerly, ‘I wish you could: that is the very thing I was going to ask you—why can’t you? Why not have your portrait painted by him! You ought to be done some time or another, so that we could hang you up in the hall with poor papa and the others, and I’m convinced Cherry would do you just as well as they are done. Get him to come down here, Tom, at once, before Aunt Hester comes, and we’ll have lots of fun, we three together: lawn tennis, riding, fishing, everything.’

‘And portrait-painting in the odd five

minutes before dinner, eh, Lucy? I'm afraid it won't do, old girl. He's a rum chap, is Cherry. I wanted him to paint me or anything else he fancied a month or two ago, but he's as proud as Lucifer, says it would be robbing me to do so until he can give me *quid pro quo*, and all that sort of thing. It's a queer, visionary career that of painting. I suppose it's all right, and he knows best; there's no doubt he's clever at anything, and I believe he knows what he is about; but if he had only taken up something more definite one might have had interest enough to give him a lift, perhaps. There's the Church, now. If he had taken to the Church I could have given him the living here—a rare good one, as he knows—when old Jones dies. But he won't have the Church. Says he wouldn't do for a parson. Got scruples or something, I suppose. I don't understand these things, but for my part, I can't see why Cherry shouldn't make an excellent parson; a straight-going, right-thinking, manly, cricketing young fellow like he is, with a warm heart and no nonsense, seems to me to be just the sort of man one likes to

see take orders, and work a country parish. But there seems to be an idea about, that unless a youngster is what I call very goody-goody he's not fit for the Church. There must be parsons and parsons, and I for one should have as much confidence in old Cherry's doing his duty, as I would in one of your very straitlaced sort doing his.'

'He's right all the same, Tom, to let it alone if he doesn't feel it's his sphere,' says Lucy.

'I dare say he is. I don't say that I'm a good judge, you know; only I believe he would do a lot of good in a parish like this, all the same, keeping people square, looking after their welfare temporally, and giving them food of a good straightforward, healthy sort, spiritually. However, if he doesn't fancy it, I expect, as you say, he is right to let it alone. But he'll have a longish time to wait, I'm afraid, before he makes much out of that painting business. There are such a lot of pictures painted, and if they are all sold, where the money comes from and the people who buy them I can't think. I wonder he doesn't look out for some young

woman with a lot of tin now, and get married! One of these *nouveaux riches*, cotton-spinning, stock-jobbing fellows would give him a daughter readily enough for his name, you know; and he might get Hawkwell to let him buy back Charters again, and quite set himself up. Don't you think that's rather a good programme, Lucy?

'I suppose so. Will you have some more tea?'

Perhaps Lucy could have given a better opinion as to the chance of Cheriton marrying an heiress such as Tom suggested than her brother was aware of. She was now a young woman of some experience in the world, culled it may be from a small sphere, but nevertheless of sufficient worth to enable her to distinguish between the ring of the true and the patter of the false metal. At the county balls and country houses that had offered her her principal dissipations, she had already met several men who had hinted or whispered their admiration and devotion, and at first she had been disposed to attach importance to these butterfly utterings, and to figure to herself Captain Shabraque and

others her slaves, lost in a rapt meditation about herself, as they would say they would be, after the ball, in the solitude of their quarters or their smoke-rooms, instead of jovially eating oysters, and quaffing draughts in merry company, as was their grimly unpoetic occupation in truth. Now she was grown wiser, and had learnt to appraise with tolerable certainty the value of the various wordy tributes that were offered her.

When young Broadacres, for instance, had appeared at breakfast on the morning of a certain favourite meet, attired in a suit of roomy tweeds instead of his wonted gear of scarlet and leathers, and had given her to understand that the fact was that he preferred a morning spent in her society to all the meets of hounds in the county, she was not without a shrewd suspicion that the doubtful state of the ground and the shaky condition of his stud had something to do with the preference ; and when Jack Larkspur of the 25th Hussars had come trundling four-and-twenty long miles through the snow in order, so he said at least, to get the chance of a valse with her at the Polkington Ball,

she was able to infer therefrom that he was to be one of the party during the great battue week at Polkington House.

Cheriton Charters had said nothing to her of love or admiration since the conversation he had had with her brother. Along with the loss of the estate that bore his name, had come, as he felt, the absolute impossibility of all present lovemaking; and he had therefore manfully resolved to utter no word to Lucy of the great love his loyal heart bore her still. And yet her woman's wit enabled her to read in his very silence the lines of the old, old story, and to test the value of his unspoken love in the passionate glance of his eye. Not for poor Cherry, as she knew, would be any short way found from his poverty in the ignoble resort of a wealthy match.

'Talking of Charters,' says Tom, whose prosperous, untroubled countenance, by the way, formed a great contrast just now to the image his previous remarks had called to Lucy's mind; 'talking of Charters reminds me I have had a note from Hawkwell. He's coming round this morning, he says, to see

me about something or another ; so you will have a chance of meeting the new master of Charters.'

'What a privilege I' says Lucy, with the slightest possible curl of her lip.

'Oh, you needn't be so awfully sarcastic, young woman ! He's not a bad sort at all, isn't Gus Hawkwell. Good-looking, a good shot, and all the rest of it, as you'll say yourself when you've seen him.'

'Gus Hawkwell, Tom ! Since when have you taken to calling each other "Gus" and "Tom" ?'

'Why shouldn't we ? They are the names our sponsors gave us, or a shorter and more convenient form of them ; besides, everybody calls me "Tom," you know.'

'And everybody calls Mr. Hawkwell "Gus," I suppose !'

'I dare say they do. There are some fellows who always are "Jack," "Tom," and "Dick" to everybody, somehow.'

'But you have known each other so short a time !'

'That makes no odds, Lucy ; we've managed to hit it off, somehow. Some

fellows one might know for ever, without calling them "Gus." There's Mr. Holdforth, M.P. and F.R.S., for instance. I've known him all my life, and yet nothing would make me forget my sense of the fitness of things so far as to address him as "Bob."

'And the great Mr. Hawkwell, is he quite what you would call a gentleman, Tom?'

'The *great* Mr. Hawkwell! What a lump of prejudice you are, you little minx! Oh, yes! One needn't be too hypercritical about that, you know. He's very well received in town, I'm told; not that I know much about that, as I never go there, for an hour longer than I am compelled to. But I hear he belongs to one or two good clubs, and seems to know all about everybody. More than that, he is our neighbour, and has all the influence of apparently great wealth.'

'Which he made by boiling soap, I suppose?'

'Very likely; I can't say. He must have boiled it exceedingly well, if so, to have made so much out of it; but I fancy sheep, or something else in the colonial way, was, in point of fact, the source of his greatness; and

it ill becomes you, my Lady Lucy, to be turning up your aristocratic little nose at wealth begotten of enterprise. Was not our domain of Pym Pastures purchased by our grandfather, and were not the shekels necessary to that end laboriously earned first by our great relative in the coal trade ?

‘I believe our grandfather had mines, to be sure, in the North somewhere, and they were no doubt very productive. One thing I know is, that our mother was a Pierrepont.’

‘And Hawkwell’s was very likely, for aught I know to the contrary, a Howard or a Montmorenci. One thing I know is, that grandpapa Gaythorne made his money on the coal exchange before our mother changed the name of Pierrepont for that of Gaythorne ; and another thing I know is, that I am going to light a pipe and have a look at the stables, instead of wasting my time digging prejudice out of an ill-conditioned sister.’

‘And I am coming with you, Tom, if you will wait a minute.’

I am not going to take my reader to the

stables, however, whither Lucy accompanied her brother, and watched with exemplary patience the feeling of legs and crests, the punching of ribs, the removing of bandages, and the other many offices incident to Tom's inspection of his stud.

An hour later she is amongst her flowers and creepers on the raised terrace, arrayed in tan garden-gloves and a great holland apron, humming now a few bars of the last new valse, now a few verses of the last London street song, picked up involuntarily from Tom, and sung from sheer lightheartedness, not from deliberate selection ; for the summer is young and the day is young, and she and the birds and flowers, and the fat puppy pulling at her apron's corner, are young too, and exulting in the sunshine of mere glad existence.

Augustus Hawkwell, riding along the carriage-drive on his cob, sees the fair slight figure, glistening in white draperies against the background of dark yew, and slightly tightens his curb-rein that he may the longer enjoy a picture so greatly to his finished taste.

As he comes nearer, the swelling music of her pretty voice is wafted to him, and, as we know,

‘Cupid hath not in his quiver’s choice
One arrow deadlier than woman’s voice.’

The well-managed and obedient cob steps yet a slower pace ; not every day are Mr. Hawkwell’s rural pursuits relieved by such a treat as now greets his eye and ear. It is an oasis of real pleasure amidst what is to him, perhaps, rather a dreary desert of provincial life. It is a gleam of poetry shining out suddenly from a sombre cloud of comfortable prose. Soon, despite the address of his pony in suiting his paces to the circumstances of the position, he is close beneath the terrace-wall, and near enough for the articulations of the voice to reach his ears :

‘Says the young Obadiah to the old Obadiah,
“I am dry, Obadiah, I am dry ;”
Says the old Obadiah to the young Obadiah,
“So am I, Obadiah, so am I.”’

Thus prose reasserts itself, and Augustus Hawkwell bursts involuntarily into a laugh, and Miss Gaythorne, peeping over the ter-

race balustrade, sees beneath her the unwonted spectacle of a pacing black cob, and meets the laughing eyes of a gentleman who is at present quite a stranger to her.

CHAPTER III.

ROSES.

AND rather peculiar eyes they were, too—eyes that were so penetrating, so steadfast, that they compelled the object on which they were fixed to be conscious of their gaze; eyes that twinkled with who should say whether mirth or mischief; eyes that conveyed at once the impression of having seen many and various things—great pale grey eyes, deep-set beneath a pair of straight, almost frowning brows.

Miss Gaythorne watched the retreating figure of the strange cavalier with an attention, almost with a fascination, quite unusual with her. Young Broadacres would come ambling down the drive, and past the terrace-wall on his perfect hack, or some bold

dragoon from Mudchester would ride a bumping trot on the like course, and, should Lucy be on the terrace, she would scarce notice their careful passage of herself more than she would the advent of the butcher in his cart, or the bailiff on the rough trotting pony. Yet this stranger, strolling along much at his leisure, at once engages her active attention, and as he turns the sweep that leads to the Hall-door, she allows her curiosity an indulgence, and makes a careful scrutiny of him from behind the shelter of the clipped yew hedge.

“Costly your habit as your purse can bear.” Light homespun suit by Poole, a scarlet geranium to his button-hole, and what a real love of a cob! she mutters; as she mentally notes the various points of his appearance. ‘Well-dressed, yet not over-dressed. How is it some men never do look over-dressed? Tom, now, in that get-up, and with that carefully-trimmed moustache and imperial, would look like a provincial actor, or a fashionable hair-dresser; his dear, honest, well-to-do face is only equal to the matter-of-fact whisker; Cherry, too, I

can only fancy *him* in a roomy old shooting-jacket. This man is different somehow from them both; let us hope he is going to relieve the even tenor of our existence by some new ideas.'

And while Lucy is thus musing and taking these personal notes, the object of her remarks arrives at the door, and Black Monday, the most perfect-mannered of cobs, stretching out his fore and hind legs into a posture much affected by rocking-horses, stands still as a statue, whilst his rider's long leisurely leg is swept over his neck in dismounting.

'Mr. Gaythorne is not within, sir. No, sir, master is, I believe, in the ten-acre meadow. If you will please to come in, I will send to him, sir.'

Thus Gallons, the trusty pantler of Pym Pastures. Mr. Hawkwell does please to wait, and will so do on the terrace-walk, till such time as friend Tom shall be summoned from the ten-acre meadow.

Lucy, standing on tip-toe to reach a much-desired but exalted piece of honeysuckle, becomes conscious that he of the strange

eyes and the imperial is in her presence, and in a moment a voice with a remarkably clear accentuation is speaking to her.

‘May I reach the flower for you, and may I introduce myself to you, Miss Gaythorne?’ it said; ‘my name is Hawkwell, and you may have heard from your brother that I am living at Charters!’

She turned round to acknowledge his self-introduction, and took in at a glance the principal features of this new acquaintance, the rather prominent aquiline nose, the massive jaw, and the resolute look of the strange grey eyes. And he too, though the long dark lashes swept down at once to conceal them, had noted the liquid depths of violet blue that met his gaze, and knew that in the course of a somewhat large experience he had never seen such glorious eyes before.

‘I hope you will forgive my impertinence in making myself known to you,’ he said, as he was reaching, with his back turned towards her, the desired flower. ‘I know we English people are very particular about not holding any converse with each other before

we have been formally introduced by a third party. But it struck me that the situation of two people, the identity of each perfectly well known to the other, standing together on the same gravel-walk without saying a word, would be rather ridiculous ; and so, as you see, I was fain to violate all the proprieties, and begin a conversation. There is the honeysuckle at last at all events, unlike the Obadiah of song, still wet apparently with the morning dew——’

‘You heard my silly song, I am afraid, Mr. Hawkwell !’ said Lucy, looking up with a little laugh. ‘It must have greatly edified you !’

‘I heard you certainly, from afar. The delightful “Sweethearts” valse first, and the romantic speeches of both Obadiahs as a fit sequel. I was greatly edified, but my edification was all too short ; some day I shall hope, by lying hid beneath the terrace or somewhere about the place, to have a longer treat.’

‘I am afraid your patience will be greatly tried before you ever hear me sing *that* song again, Mr. Hawkwell !’

‘And I might be discovered lurking amongst the shrubs, and ignominiously ousted by the gardeners, mightn’t I? Never mind, I have plenty of patience, and I will brave even the terrors of expulsion in such a cause. What glorious lilies-of-the-valley, and what a promise of roses, Miss Gaythorne! this place must be a paradise later on in the year!’

‘Yes! I am proud of my flowers. Are you fond of flowers?’

‘Very; but, alas! flowers are not our forte at Charters at present. My predecessor’s tastes did not incline that way, I suppose. Anyhow, the gardens have been a good deal neglected, and I am taking great pains now to get them into order. It’s strange, too, that they should not have had more care bestowed on them, for young Charters is a man of some artistic taste; and I have about the place two or three studies of flowers by him, which show clearly that he appreciated them. Have you heard, Miss Gaythorne, how he is getting on? He has taken to the easel and the brush in earnest I am told. And what a charming life he may

have of it, too! Of course, there will 'be lingering regrets for the old place. I, the interloper, know how to feel for him there. But if he can forget that to some extent, and be philosopher enough to take things as they are, he may have a glorious compensation in his art. I know of no career so unfettered; an artist may travel where he will and yet take his occupation along with him. And they do travel about too: one meets them everywhere, these painters, and somehow they are nearly always worth meeting—full of information and good fellowship. A few years ago I was in Rome, and saw a good deal of the pleasant painter-set there. Some of them had hardly anything in the world to live on, yet though their hoard was little, their wants were few; if there was no bone in the cupboard, and no tobacco in the pipe, there was always a comrade at hand who had perhaps suffered a like experience of adversity, and who was ready to freely supply their want; and they were as happy in this kindly form of common plenty as though they were all young merchant princes doubting where to place their abundant moneys.'

“Smile, and we smile, the lords of many lands ;
Frown, and we smile, the lords of our own hands.”

Your artist friends seem to take the philosophic Enid for their model, Mr. Hawkwell,’ Lucy said, snipping away at her flowers.

‘Just so. They are banded together in a jolly camaraderie against the wiles of Dame Fortune,’ Hawkwell replied. ‘I was quite grieved to part with my light-hearted friends of the brush, I recollect, when I left Rome, and I thought that in going away to the East, I was bidding farewell for a time at all events to society of that kind. I was wrong though, for I found an easel standing in the midst of an Arab encampment, and one bearing the British name of Brown sitting, bearded, smoking and smiling as ever, behind it, apparently as much at home as when I had last seen him at work in homely Bloomsbury. Meantime, they are not all penuriously begging macaroni and fids of tobacco from one another. Look at our rising and risen painters here in England, making money as fast as they can paint! One of these days we shall hear of young

Charters as the fashionable portrait-painter of the day, with all the world clamouring for a sitting. A rich man then, with the old roof again over his head.'

'Ah! if that could only be!' sighed Lucy, apparently unconscious that the remark was perhaps not strictly complimentary to her companion. 'If that could only be! You certainly know how to paint a picture in roseate words, Mr. Hawkwell. I am afraid poor Cheriton Charters is not going to set the Thames on fire all at once, though.'

'Oh! Life is a see-saw, you know, Miss Gaythorne. One up, t'other down. I've had the luck with me for a time; it will be Charters's turn soon perhaps, and I shall be ousted in his favour amidst the rejoicings of the populace. But I am boring you, I fear, with this long discourse all about nothing, and here I see is your brother coming. How are you, Tom?'

And so she had made Mr. Hawkwell's acquaintance, and after all was ready to confess freely that her prejudice had been ill-placed. Was this the man whom she had pictured to herself as a mere boorish par-

venu ! This man with the easy presence and a certain dashing style, which she could have hardly defined in words, but of the existence of which she was conscious from the obvious absence of it in others who had been about her hitherto ! Could she fancy Tom or Cheriton, any of the neighbouring young squires, or even of the bold dragoons from Mudchester, dropping suddenly into her strange society in the garden, and knowing at once how to make himself known without awkwardness or impertinence, and how to talk gracefully of nothing in such a way as to interest her, and put her in roseate conceit with the troubled life of her friend ?

She laughed to herself, as she looked up at honest brother Tom, and pictured him shuffling his hands about in doubt what to say next after he had established a mutual understanding about the weather, when placed in a like situation. Great, bold, manly Tom, who knew so well how to handle an unruly colt, or to hold his gun level with his quarry, who was the idol of his tenantry and of his servants, because whilst they knew him to be generous and indulgent, they knew also that

he would stand no nonsense. Who loved his sister, as she knew, better than he loved himself. Who, from his very guilelessness, was utterly unsuspicious of everybody else. And Cheriton Charters ! earnest, true Cheriton, tender-hearted as a woman, brave as a lion ; battling with his great misfortunes, the loss of wealth and station, and of hopes perhaps yet more dear ; bearing his part nevertheless with a cheerful heart and an even front, that showed no symptoms of distress.

These, with some of the gay young soldiers, and other friends living round about Pym Pastures, had formed her little world hitherto, with which she had been so wholly content that she had dreaded and detested any symptoms of change ; and when Charters had been purchased by a stranger, she had instinctively been prepared to dislike that stranger, and to fancy all sorts of vulgar possibilities connected with him. And now the stranger had come, this man of ingots, and vulgar views, and common tastes, had come with a grace and a presence quite foreign to the ways of all those others whom she had learned to like and love.

There was that about him, as she felt, which made one desire to know more.

In a word, he interested her, and she was prepared to acknowledge him an acquisition to her court.

It was a delicious morning, the sun giving out just sufficient warmth to make it pleasant to bask in its rays without the necessity of seeking some shade to sit under. A morning wherein to loiter on pleasant lawns and listen to the song of birds, to note the buds bursting into flower, and other the glorious signs of dawning summer. A morning wherein it is *dulce desipere in loco* to loll in the luxurious lap of leisure, to light our choicest calumet, and to banish care in giving the rein to flattering hope and fancy.

‘Weed?’ said Hawkwell, tendering mechanically his ample cigar-case to his friend, whilst, lounging comfortably on a cunningly constructed garden-seat, he gazed with silent admiration at Lucy’s retreating figure, noting with the delight of a tasteful connoisseur the free, springy gait, the graceful curves of the pliant figure, the massy coils of dark hair on the slight thoroughbred-looking head, and

the small arched foot that was now and again just visible beneath her white draperies as she walked along the terrace to the house.

‘Thanks,’ said Tom, as he took the proffered cigar, and for some minutes no other than the above monosyllabic conversation took place between them ; from which it may be gathered that the relations of these two, of however short a standing, were already of an intimate nature. For of friends there are those who talk and those who are silent to each other, and ’twixt those with whom a silence never seems irksome there is at least more intimacy and sympathy than with those who think themselves constrained to sustain a conversation.

‘If I were you, Tom,’ said Hawkwell at length, waving his cigar in the direction of an ugly block of buildings in yellow brick and stucco, that stood a little apart from the comely Elizabethan structure of the Hall—
‘If I were you, Tom, I should knock down all that block of stables !’

‘Why on earth ?’ asks Gaythorne, rudely awakened from his silent reflections on the demands of that exigent tenant, Mr. Govel,

by this monstrous proposition ; ‘Why on earth should I ?’

‘So that you may have room to build them up again, to be sure.’

‘What *do* you mean, Gus ?’

‘What I say—they are quite hideous in themselves, and ought not to be allowed to stand anywhere. Placed as they are, they are simply offensive. Can’t you picture how enormously the place would be improved if something in keeping with the old Hall stood there in their place ? Why it’s a glorious site in itself for a building of any artistic merit, backed as it would be by that noble clump of ilex, and standing, too, just where the stream makes its most picturesque bend. I know nothing in this neighbourhood, hardly anything in its way in England even, so beautiful as the terrace at Pym, and I have never come here yet without longing to abolish that hideous eyesore, that monster of bad taste.’

‘It has done very well for a good many years all the same, my dear fellow ; and what was good enough for my father is good enough for me, I suppose.’

‘It has stood for perhaps thirty or forty years at the outside, I should say. Built, from the look of it, at about the worst period of what will some day be stigmatised as the Victorian era of architecture ; and as to its being good enough for you because it was good enough for your predecessors, that is an argument beneath contempt, the fallacy of which is daily demonstrated in practice by the use of railway trains instead of stage-coaches, not to mention the penny post, the electric telegraph, gas-lights, and other blessings advantageous to us over those of our ancestors.’

‘You have such magnificent views about things, Hawkwell. You are always wanting me to go careering about, taking enormous fences and otherwise making a stir like a big man, instead of jogging soberly along in my quiet obscure way, fully contented to be insignificant and happy.’

‘So I do, old fellow. You are quite right. You’ve got the ball at your feet if you would only condescend to kick it. Youth, health, wealth, county position. You ought to be master of hounds, member for the county,

and eventually a peer of the realm, with your means and capabilities, instead of settling down to a jog-trot career of fattening cattle and sentencing small miscreants at petty sessions.'

'Make a great bonfire, in fact. Flash up in a blaze of fireworks, and sit in outer darkness immediately and ever afterwards. I'm only a modest whip, Gus, capable of handling the ribbons of my quiet family chaise with safe skill, so at least I trust and believe ; but I have no ambition to take the unruly team of the Sun in hand, and bring myself to merited grief in consequence. I have no ambition, that's the fact.'

'I have ! I would risk the grief, for my part, if only I had the offer of a seat in the chariot. Nothing would tire and bore and discontent me so much as respectable mediocrity. When I was first entering on life with a very limited number of pounds a year, a humble clerk in a city house, my employers, after a time, were good enough to offer me a snug berth, with a fixed income of some five or six hundred a year, and a 'genteel'-looking house in the main street of a country

town. I was rather tempted to take it at first. I looked that I should have enough to keep a good horse or two, and in many ways should secure myself a comfortable nest. Then I made a careful scrutiny of my own character and tastes, and came to the conclusion that Augustus Hawkwell tied down to a provincial career, with his wings clipped and no scope for his energy and ambition, would be a miserable being. Can you fancy me, Tom, "seeing life" at Smugsby-in-the-mud, intriguing for a seat in the town council, jealous of the growing influence of the local draper, and perhaps patronised by some snob who had become borough member! I declined the seductive offer on the evening of the day on which it was offered to me. I had that in me which made me prefer being only a pauper, with hope and scope and freedom, to the dull luxury of mere settled comfort. I told my employers this, and they, good men and true, respected my decision; and more than that, gave me the benefit of their influence in furthering my ambition. Well, well! I am talking of myself, a proceeding not dear to me; and, if by

any chance you have been listening, you must be, I should say, sufficiently bored !’

‘I have been listening, my dear Gus, with rapt attention and with awful respect ; for in your position I have no hesitation in saying I should have jumped at the offer of Smugsby-in-the-mud. But meantime Pym Pastures is not Smugsby-in-the-mud, and without arrogance let me say that I am above being jealous of the influence of the local draper, drape he never so remuneratively, and intrigue he never so cleverly.’

‘I should whack down those stables all the same,’ said Hawkwell, flipping off the ash of his cigar with his finger, as though it were symbolical of the offending block of buildings.

‘What ! as a first step to the Peerage ?’

‘As a first step in an enlightened career, yes.’

‘But, my good fellow, only this morning I have been bullied and badgered by one of my tenants (one Govel, you know the man) to build him a new barn and to do all manner of other improvements up at the Hemmings Hill farm.’

‘Then, if necessary, I would build the new

barn and do all manner of other improvements, required by Mr. Govel, at the Hemmings Hill farm.'

'And pray, where is the money to come from for all these sweeping reforms?'

'Oh! money be hung! Tom, you have lots of that.'

'That is so like you fellows who have the command of personal property. You always seem to think that if a man has land he is rolling in ready money. You wonder we don't knock down our houses, and build them up again. You wonder we don't have a yacht at Cowes, and a string in the shires; a house in Grosvenor Square, and a box on the moors, because you think we have unlimited command of money. If you saw my banker's book, you would sing to a different tune. My friend, you don't take into account the numerous outgoings and necessary expenses, the demands of the Govels, the repairs, the drainings, and the many other things that make so big a hole in our rent, not to mention the various little legacies, jointures, etc., etc., with which nearly all landed properties are apt to be charged.'

‘I’m an ignorant, thoughtless infant—am I not, Tom?—who has lived eight-and-thirty years with his eyes shut; who has seen life in its money-getting phase in not a few forms, from sheep-farming in Australia to the crooked ways of commerce and finance in more than one European capital; who has steered his course amidst the many shoals, and rocks, and storms of such a career, not altogether unsuccessfully; who has acquired for himself a comfortable parcel of land, and yet who knows nothing whatever of its intricate management; who is in fact in a bewildering state of ignorance about his affairs, and who had far better have gone to rule over two clerks at Smugsby-in-the-mud, rather than meddle with so dangerous and complicated a venture as a landed estate!’

Tom Gaythorne puffed complacently at his cigar, without responding immediately to Hawkwell’s observations. There was something in the dash and enterprise of his friend that aroused his admiration, and it had perhaps been due to this feeling that he had so quickly and easily become on such intimate terms with him. He knew that without

pluck and coolness and great perseverance he could never have attained the wealth and position which he now held. And pluck and coolness and perseverance were among Tom's favourite virtues.

Hawkwell was never known to brag offensively of his career, yet much of it was known to Gaythorne from other sources, whilst the spirit of the man was evident in the large views which he entertained about ambitious possibilities, and the boldness with which he was prepared to overcome all difficulties that might stand in the way. Splendidly successful in his career, there was something catching and fascinating in the spirit which had guided it. And Tom Gaythorne, whilst he felt the influence of his fire, felt also a certain smallness and meanness in the snug yet sleepy lines, in which his own future life was destined as at present to be laid. Yes, now he looked at it from Hawkwell's view, that block of stables certainly was an egregious disfigurement to the immediate environs of the Hall.

'And you would have down that place, eh, Gus?' he asked, returning to the subject.

‘If Pym Pastures were mine, it should not stand a day longer than I could help, certainly. If you think me impertinent for saying so, stop me, Tom. But can’t you see how much better a red-gabled edifice of a similar architecture to the house would look in place of that horrible structure?’

‘But, all joking apart, my dear Gus, these views of yours, however roseate, are a trifle expensive to carry out, and my means are not at present so elastic as people imagine.’

Hawkwell leaned back in his seat, his hat tilted forward almost on the bridge of his nose, placing in broad shadow those resolute grey eyes.

‘The fact is, Tom,’ he said, after the two had sat together again in silence for a few minutes—‘the fact is a man should have a balance of ready money, so to call it, in order to be comfortable in living on an estate.’

‘But how in the world is he to get it? You talk glibly of money as though it was to be picked up like acorns.’

‘So it is—if you go the right way about it, that is.’

‘I can’t say that I have had the luck hitherto to hit on the right way then. As far as my experience goes, money has a slippery way with it of passing out of my hands almost directly it is in them. My rents and my bills run a neck-and-neck race together, and I am bound to say the bills, as a rule, have the advantage of the struggle in the long-run. If ever I promise myself the free use of a little sum wherewith to enjoy an unwonted pleasure and indulge some whim or taste, I almost invariably find that some necessary expenditure turns up just in time to forestall me. Here is Govel one day reminding me gently of the repairing covenants in his lease. Some other tenant equally anxious for his bond a month after. I have several aunts and people sucking the life-blood of my poor revenues by reason of their portions being chargeable on my lands; and I have an expensive habit of rarely denying myself anything in the way of horse-flesh that takes my foolish fancy. The sickness and the maintenance of these, not to mention their prime cost, make a considerable hole in what is left of my income; and so, to

tell truth, I have become quite a stranger for some time back to the rattle of the guineas in my pocket. If you—whom I always look on, you know, as a sort of Napoleon of finance—can only show me how my poor shillings can be made to become pounds, I am sure I shall be extremely grateful to you ; for I have plenty of channels yet for spending them. There's Lucy, for instance ! She ought to be coming out in the world now—in a bigger world, I mean, than this little sphere down here ; and I should dearly like to give her a season in London, have her presented at Court, and give her the chance of enlarging her ideas amongst a wider acquaintance. You will laugh, I dare say, and pooh pooh me for a niggardly screw—you who never stick at any expense—and would suppose that I can do all this sort of thing without feeling it. Literally, however, I don't see my way to it without getting into debt. Lucy is not the sort of prudent young woman who could do a London season in two gowns and a bonnet. I know her little ways so well ! I should have a milliner's bill of several hundred pounds to settle, in addition to the various

contingent expenses of house and stable rent, the opera tickets, etc., etc., which I should have to supply, and the entertainments of one sort and another which she would undoubtedly insist on my giving. The little minx wouldn't say "Thank you" for a parsimonious fling, and she's about right; if one proposes to do a thing of that sort, one had better make up one's mind to do it right well or to let it alone altogether. There, you have a comprehensive view of my affairs, and if you can throw the light of your fortune-favoured genius upon them, I am open to any amount of hints, you know.'

Hawkwell laughed, and proceeded to draw another cigar from his case.

'I shouldn't hesitate for one moment to give your sister a season in town, my dear boy,' he said, as he gave forth the few great puffs incident to the ignition of tobacco; 'I shouldn't think twice about that, cost you what it might. Think of the enormous advantage it would be to her!'

'Aye, and think also of Queer Street! I am not joking, Hawkwell, in telling you my means are a trifle cramped.'

‘Money is money, isn’t it?’ said the other oracularly, after a pause, as he folded his arms, and leaning back in his seat cast a glance from his shaded eyes at his companion.

‘It is indeed,’ sighed poor Tom, who had reason to be aware of the truism.

‘But there’s another truth connected with it, Tom, that some of us are alive to, and it is that money makes money.’

‘It has made precious little for me hitherto, Gus.’

‘So I should suppose. Saving your presence, Tom, you country gentlemen have a somewhat elementary notion of the value of £ s. d. You have a crude notion that a shilling is worth only the goods which a shilling will buy.’

‘That is quite my idea, I’ll own,’ said Gaythorne. ‘I have yet to learn that it will buy *more* than a shilling’s worth of goods.’

‘Quite so. Now I will tell you what I expect it to buy. I expect it to buy two shillings, or more accurately, to make another shilling.’

‘Ah! you mean, Hawkwell, by some prudent investment at compound interest. I am afraid I am not by nature constituted for that sort of patient prudence and saving.’

‘Nor am I, Tom, if you mean by patient prudence leaving my money in consols, and not spending it, adding some little beggarly pittance of interest to it year by year, and hugging a sweet sense of security by way of recompense for the smallness of my returns. Look here, old fellow: a year or two ago you managed to lay out some money—I won’t ask you how much—though I could probably make a tolerably near guess—in the purchase of a couple of farms!’

‘I did; you are quite right. A little windfall came to me on my grandmother’s death, and I took the opportunity I had long sought to round off the estate.’

‘Exactly. Well, never mind the estate for the present. By rounding it off, as you call it, you, perhaps, purchased some other angles that will also want rounding off one of these days. But that is no matter just now; what I would ask is, what return do you expect to get on that investment in money?’

I mean, quite apart from the vain satisfaction of an estate in a ring fence.'

'Pon my word, Gus, I can't say exactly ; much what I get on the rest of the property, I suppose. There are two meadows on the Firth farm that I get four pounds an acre for ; taken all round, I suppose the two holdings pay me about two pound an acre, roughly speaking.'

'And when you have deducted repairs and renewals, and other outgoings, what percentage will you get on your outlay ?'

'About two-and-a-half, perhaps three per cent.'

'H'm,' mused Hawkwell, half aloud, 'I wonder where I should be if I had been satisfied with two-and-a-half per cent. all my life !'

'Ah ! but there's a glorious security in land, recollect, Gus.'

'Oh ! of course ; so there is in consols. If you want good, comfortable, dull security and sweet sleep through life, I have no more to say. It is not the way in which the nimble shilling is made to do its work, that's all. Every man to his taste. For my part

I confess I like the excitement of adventure, not to mention the sweets of profit with which Fortune has favoured my bravery; we are all differently constituted, I suppose, and perhaps you steady people who like the repose of a certain income are wise to be content with two per cent. or so in land. You can ride comfortably about your rounded estates every day, and go to bed every night blessed with the sober satisfaction that, if the harvest be a good one, Hodge will probably pay his rent.

“Fain would you climb, but that you fear to fall;”

and so,

“If thy mind fail thee, do not climb at all;”

that is a couplet very apposite to the ways of you two per cent. people, and I dare say you are quite right not to climb at all, but to sit “comfy, comfy,” on the terra firma of land. And yet now and then you launch out too, some of you, into wild speculation. “Nothing venture, nothing have,” you suddenly seem to say to yourselves, and so we see you with crooked brows bent on a betting-book, studying for weeks the lists of race-horses,

and their performances as recorded in the daily pages of the sporting press, and otherwise occupying yourselves with as much thought and labour over the risk of a few pounds, as in other theatres men will take with a fortune at stake. What a busy, nay, what a careworn person was Tom Gaythorne about the time of last year's Derby! You were up in town about twice a week seeking information, and endeavouring to get this or that bet on; you could talk rationally on no subject, so engrossed were you in the various prospects of the great race, and the effect each rumour had on that vast literary feat of yours—your betting-book. I believe you hardly slept at all, but lay awake making abstruse calculations in the dead watches of the night upon the chances of this or that horse galloping faster, or for that matter being allowed to gallop faster, than another. It must have cost you hours and hours of care and anxiety; it was beginning, I verily believe, to tell on your health, and in the result you lost—what did you lose on last year's Derby, Tom?

‘A cool three hundred, I am sorry to say;

I don't mind telling you, Gus, but I don't want it mentioned, you know.'

'A cool three hundred! Ruin must have stared you in the face.'

'Ah! but I made a good book on the Leger, and won three hundred and ten——'

'Netting altogether—ten pounds! Why, Tom, you are a Rothschild! It was a brilliant achievement, and perhaps worth the labour, and the worry, and the thought! That is for you to judge. For my part, I prefer a rather larger and quicker sort of business, and yet one equally if not more safe.'

'Ah! it's all very well, Hawkwell, for you to chaff a fellow,' said Gaythorne; 'but for your sort of business a man must have a clever head, and, so to speak, be in the swim. I am not clever at figures and money-market, and that—it's not my line. I know what land looks like, I can tell pretty quickly if my tenants are not farming fair, and I know the points of a horse, a dog, or a cow tolerably well, too. Mine is a modest business I dare say, but I *know* it, that's the great point after all. And if I do fly an occasional

kite, why it's just for the fun of the thing, and to give me a little excitement.'

'And to win ten pounds, Tom, eh! No, my dear boy, you are wrong. A man need not be very clever, as you suggest, to make money, if only he will go to work in the right way. And as to "the swim," a fellow only wants a friend to launch him, and give him a few hints in the earliest struggles, and it's quite surprising how easy the art is to practise, when once acquired.

'Let me now just give you a little example from the proceedings of two supposititious individuals. A and B, let us say. A is a country gentleman to whom a few hundreds are important. Nevertheless with wilful recklessness, yet with wearying labour, he devotes himself to risking his few hundreds on the turf, and after months of waiting and watching, of care and thought, succeeds, taking losses and winnings together, in netting his ten pounds. B, on the other hand, is a gentleman of leisurely habits, and who values his time and his health. Instead of rushing wildly and fretfully from place to place in search of desired odds; instead of

harrying himself with anxiety about the health and sinews of this or that horse, he composedly reads his paper as he travels to the city of London. Thus occupied he learns, not the chances of this or that horse as reported by touts, but the quoted prices of larger creatures, the shares let us say in this or that transaction. Frequent observation in this manner enables him to know pretty accurately the upward or downward tendency of this sort of property, and with a modicum of address he is able to avail himself of their fluctuations.'

'Much as A would avail himself of the quoted odds on a given race, and the probable performance of certain horses,' remarked Tom Gaythorne, as he conceived, with some point.

'A horse, my dear Tom, is a very uncertain animal whereon to embark any large sum. He may break down in training; he may be scratched for some utterly unforeseen reason; he may, as you know, not be intended to win. His performances after all are not very frequent, and can be estimated not so much by the legitimate gauge of common sense

and observation, as by information of a more obscure sort. For my part, when I do bet I never stand to win or lose more than a few dozen of gloves. If I have a mind to speculate, I prefer an arena of a larger and more regular sort. Every man to his taste, you know, Tom.'

'Oh, of course,' said Tom, who was becoming interested in the conversation; 'Oh, of course; but then you know a man's tastes must be governed by his opportunities. Now I like a little venture now and then, I confess. I suppose it's the real love of sport that's in me. But then my little kites are naturally flown on a race-course, because they come more in my way, you know. I'm a mere baby in money matters, Hawkwell, a mere baby. In money-market affairs I mean, you know, and that. I am not very clear really about what you city fellows mean when you talk about stocks and shares going up and down, about "rigging the market," "buying for the rise," and all that sort of technical slang that you are so *au fait* at. I'm a mere baby at it, and should bring myself and my fortunes to signal grief were I to attempt to

meddle with it. Like poor Mr. Charters for instance—the late man I mean, of course. For aught I know he might be master of Charters still if only he had not gone dabbling in speculation and finance.’

‘Ah! poor Charters!’ mused Hawkwell aloud, with a queer little laugh. ‘I don’t know that I ever met him; but from all I hear *he* must have been indeed a baby, as you call it, at that sort of game. But then he had the folly, being a baby, to ignore all opportunity in the way of leading-strings, and to trust only to his own infantine limbs in walking about the financial world. If a man won’t take advice, and knows nothing himself, the odds are he will meet with misadventure. If A in my allegory were suddenly to leave the turf, and to invest capital on his own judgment on the Stock Exchange, he not improbably would find himself shortly worse off than if he had stuck to his betting-book. Even the astute B is not above availing himself of the assistance of C, when the latter is ready to give it. And a certain B, who shall be otherwise nameless, only yesterday, grateful for the ad-

vantage of a tolerably large circle of assisting friends, was enabled by the help of C to net a sum somewhat larger than a certain A managed to lose on last year's Derby.'

'Cunning dog B, I expect,' says Tom. 'But come, Hawkwell, I'm not much of a fellow to understand all these enigmas about A and B and C; let's go to the point. Can't you help a fellow to do a good thing too, as C did you, or rather B, or whatever you like to call yourself?'

Hawkwell laughed, and threw his cigar-end at an obtrusive robin, and made some remark upon the singular tameness of that bird—not answering so straightforward a question all at once. Apparently this was putting the matter in a light from which it had not been altogether as yet contemplated.

'What did you say? Couldn't I help you to a good thing, did you say, Tom?' he remarked carelessly. 'I don't know, my dear fellow, that you would care to follow my lead. I do things on a biggish scale, you know, now and then; when I see my way, that is. Little five-pound bets are not much in my way. I might, to be sure, now and

then have the chance of investing a little for you tolerably safely, but it's not very easy to do much for a man unless he be at hand to take the tide at the right moment. I don't know that I could do much without *carte blanche* from you. And I should not like the responsibility of doing much, even then. How much did you think of putting out, Tom ?

‘ Oh ! not much—say a hundred ; just by way of an excitement, you know.’

‘ A hundred ! My dear Tom, I think on the whole you are more a three-per-cent.-safe-as-the-bank sort of investor, than a bold speculator. A hundred pounds wouldn't make much of a return one way or another, would it ? Of course, if you will, I shall be delighted to place it for you, or rather to give you the best advice I can about placing it. Let me see, there are Railway Preference Shares ! They might be a little risky, however, even though you *might* get five pound a year by the venture. Better, perhaps, buy some debentures. They will give you four per cent. for your money, and you can sleep tolerably comfortably in the assurance that,

without very much risk, you are getting about thirty shillings a year more than if your money was in land !

‘You *will* chaff a fellow, Gus. Why can’t you be serious ? I merely say a hundred, so as to name a sum. As I said before, I am a baby in these things. Let’s say a thousand or two if you like. I have any amount of belief in your judgment. The only thing is, I haven’t got the money.’

‘Well, it might be raised with your security, you know, as I needn’t tell you, of course. If you raised it on mortgage at four and a half per cent., and invested it at ten, it would make a good return, wouldn’t it ? But don’t let me persuade you ; I am not sure you are not right to risk no more than a hundred.’

‘Ten per cent ! Gus ! that’s a big figure rather, isn’t it ? Doesn’t it mean bad security ?’

‘It means of course less security than three per cent. consols. You can’t have everything, you know. I thought you wanted some command of ready money, and that being the case, you must run a little

risk, of course. I don't propose that you should go into anything shaky or really risky, of course. If you are really serious though, and have a mind to make a little venture, you know me well enough, I hope, to be aware that I'll stand by you and give you all the advantage my experience may be to you in keeping you out of pitfalls. But you will require nerve and pluck—plenty of both, if you are going along with me; pluck to take now and then a big plunge, and nerve to know the right moment to take it, and to weather all evil rumours that may shake your confidence. If you like this sort of excitement seek it, my dear boy, with your eyes open. If not—"if," in fact, as the couplet I have quoted has it—"if thy mind fail thee, do not climb at all." My weed is out, I see, and I ought to be getting back to Charters, where I have plenty on hand to do just now, I can tell you. Good-bye, old fellow. Next time I come here I shall expect to see a good part of those stables down, you know.'

'And you will go and make a fortune for me, Gus, eh?'

'You had better think it over, Tom. I'll look after your hundred pounds for you, at any rate.'

Then they got up from the garden-seat and strolled round to the stables, and had Black Monday led out from his stall, and Tom, looking the cob over with the eye of a connoisseur, declared him to be perfect.

'That's an animal that quite fills my eye, Gus,' he said.

'He's a niceish thing, certainly,' said Hawkwell, as he swung himself into the saddle; 'so he ought to be, for I had to pay for him a goodish sum.'

'I expect so,' said Tom, passing his hand almost involuntarily down the clean, hard legs of the animal.

'Not far off a year's salary at Smugsby-in-the-mud,' laughed Hawkwell, as he rode away from the much-abused stables.

Tom Gaythorne stood for some minutes watching the departing figure of his friend as he ambled easily down the straight avenue of limes that formed for half a mile the approach to the house at Pym Pastures.

'Yes! a fellow like that would be awfully

thrown away doing drudgery in a country town, certainly,' he said to himself. 'Why, he's fit to take a lead anywhere; somehow there's a go about him that makes one feel very small one's self.'

Then he turned on his heel, and walked back again to his occupation in that ten-acre meadow, from which the visit of his friend had summoned him.

'It would make a wonderful difference, certainly,' he mused again, as he walked along over the little foot-bridge that crossed the stream, and so into the wide, park-like pastures that gave their name to his seat—'It would make a wonderful difference, certainly, if I had a little more elbow-room in the way of money. The estate wants a deal doing to one way and another, and takes up far more of my rent than I care to lay out on it, leaving me very little over to do what I like with. Of course Hawkwell is right; those stables are a disgrace; and they are only an example of the many things I should like to do about the place. It's a man's duty to improve his property for the sake of those that come after him. Poor Lucy, too!

I'm keeping her cooped up here, buried away from everybody, when she ought to be taking the town by storm. She would do it, too. She's simply lovely. I've never seen anybody one quarter as pretty yet, and she has the dignity of a duchess combined with the lightheartedness and frolic of a kitten. She ought to make a stir in the world instead of sticking down here looking after rustic and rheumatic old women in the village, or dancing with us bumpkins at the fairs. Aunt Hester could do chaperon for her, I suppose ; it wouldn't be much in my way. But I should dearly like to enter her in London, and give her a chance. After all the thing's not impossible ; if Hawkwell can make a fortune on nothing for himself, I suppose he can put me in the right lines of turning a little capital to good account too. I don't quite know what he means about mortgages and so on, but he's a remarkably clever fellow, I know that ; and if I could raise money on the Firth farm, for instance, and get ten per cent. for it, it would be better than letting it lie idle, or nearly idle, after all.'

So he mused, giving the rein to a delicious string of fancies. The sunbeams glanced around him on the rippling waters of the little stream and gladdened the fair landscape that all about him formed his own domain, and the birds sang aloud a wild joyous carol in his ears ; all nature seemed to be beaming and exulting in a present prosperity, and the young blood coursing through his veins caused him too to rejoice with vernal nature, to feel the gladness of the present, and to see the future also glowing before him amidst a splendid haze that was all *couleur de rose*.

CHAPTER IV.

AT CHARTERS.

‘I THINK he’s going to be delightful, Tom,’ said Lucy, as her brother came in at the window of the dining-room at luncheon-time. ‘I think he’s going to be delightful! I should imagine he is a person who would experience no difficulty in saying “bo” to a goose. I don’t quite know how else to express myself; if I were a man I should of course say he is “all there,” and you would understand me at once. Moreover, he is decidedly good-looking—almost handsome. Why, Tom, can’t you get your little moustaches to a point like his?’

‘Wouldn’t suit me, you know.’

‘No; you would look like an ass. Those frank, honest brows of yours compose far

better with the unadorned growth that nature has provided to harmonise with them. With a straight, almost Mephistophelian brow, like Mr. Hawkwell's, there's an air in those waxed and tutored points that makes him look capable of anything; and I am accordingly interested enough to wish to know more of him.'

'So like a woman, Lucy! all prejudice, as usual! Only this morning you wouldn't hear of being introduced to him! You couldn't believe a man who had soiled his hands by using them to make his own way in the world, could be worthy your most distant notice. He was an upstart, a snob—nothing too bad for him. Now he has come, and because he has a foppish moustache, and has picked a flower for you, he's perfect.'

'I don't expect he *is* perfect though, Tom, but somehow he is not a fop. He's well-dressed, well got up, but one doesn't notice it; one's consciousness of it is quite subordinate to a sense one has that there's a man beneath the tinsel. As to snobs, I am not sure that a few snobs would not be extremely welcome in the society of this part of the

world! We are so awfully respectable and well-behaved that a little natural vulgarity would make a pleasing change, and be quite wholesome for us. He isn't vulgar all the same, far from it. Whether he is a born gentleman, I can't say. He has certainly had the address to acquire the ways of one at all events, and what more do we want? We especially, who but a few years ago were selling sacks of coal, as you told me this morning!

‘Exactly! What more! I'm glad you have acquired a fitting sense of humility. If you listen to all my lectures with as much profit you will become a most worthy young woman one of these days, I hope. Anyhow, I'm glad you like Gus Hawkwell, for I think he's a right good fellow. He's not much of a man to talk about himself, but I expect, if he would, he could tell us of life in a great variety of forms. He has seen it in almost all quarters of the globe, I believe; and that not in the mere superficial guide-book way of the ordinary traveller, but by living amongst the different peoples as one of themselves. It is by such an apprenticeship as that that he

has really acquired that knowledge of the world, its worth, its wiles, and wickedness, that has enabled him to make the fortune he has. I can quite appreciate your being interested in him so soon, Lucy; Gus Hawkwell is no ordinary mortal, and has no ordinary countenance; there's a boldness, a resolution, a consciousness of power in the lines of it, a look of a large and stirring experience that makes one regard one's own circumstances as tame and insignificant. Moreover, Miss Lucy, you have reason to add gratitude to your admiration; for Hawkwell has been putting me up to several most desirable wrinkles in the management of my property. Sort of things, you know, that fellows such as he know as well as their alphabet, but which don't come in our way, and so don't occur to us. I believe I begin to see my way to making the old place more productive; and if so, we'll launch out a little more in the world, put a new coat of paint on ourselves, so to speak, and run up, perhaps, and have a look at what is to be seen in town for a time.'

'Tom, you really mean it?'

‘I really mean it. I think you ought to have the chance of seeing a bit of the fun of the fair, old girl, now and then, instead of living down here all your life with your horizon bounded by the salons of Mudchester, and your ideas formed by the wit and experience of its garrison.’

‘Don’t abuse the garrison, Tom, there’s a good boy; and don’t sneer at the attainments and advantages of your own neighbours. You know there are no men whom you get on with so well as soldiers; and if my life were to be spent entirely about here, I think I should not learn much harm, if I didn’t acquire much information and experience.’

‘Quite right, Lucy. Stick up for your friends, and I for one say “Amen” to your praises of the army in general, and the cavalry in particular, and hereby drain this frothy bumper of A. K. in their honour. They are right good fellows, most of them at least; but it isn’t well, my dear sister, to look at life only through one pair of glasses.’

‘Far from it, Tom; don’t misunderstand me. I am longing to go to London, and

see a bit of the world. But, Tom, it will ruin you, won't it ?

‘Not a bit of it. You leave that to me, my dear child,’ said Tom, with an air of knowing all about it.

‘But it does cost a tremendous deal, Tom, to go to London, I know,’ Lucy resumed. ‘Of course I am longing to go. I haven’t a notion what the place is like, but I long to see an opera ; I long to see the Park and all the other wonders.’ (It hardly entered Lucy’s head to long to be seen as well as to see.) ‘I long for all these things ; but I am afraid you would find me a most expensive article up there, Tom. I don’t know very much about it, of course, really ; but Mrs. Broad-acres tells me their house in Grosvenor Gardens costs them a small fortune. Where should we go, Tom ? To Grosvenor Gardens too ?’

‘Bloomsbury or Hackney most likely, Lucy. I don’t know which of the two. They are quiet and out of the row and bustle of the fashionable quarters, and you might pop into an omnibus every morning, you and Aunt Hester, and be about the gay world in half an hour. It needn’t cost us much if you

are careful ; make your own bonnets, turn your gowns, and so on.'

'I don't mind the omnibus at all. I believe it's not dignified, but that's a trifle. But gowns and bonnets! I should ruin you in those in no time. Are you coming with me?'

'Where are you going?'

'To take this pudding to old Mrs. Joyce.'

'Oh, bother the pudding! What a strange fancy you have, you women, that these old folk are made happy by your bustling about their cottages. They like the puddings, I dare say ; but can't Gallons or somebody take it round for you?'

'It's not fancy, and they can't take it. Poor old souls! they look for my coming with a great deal of pleasure, however strange it may seem to you. They love to gossip about their troubles, and it doesn't cost me much to listen or to advise. More than that, they are my friends—real, true friends!—and I like to see them.'

'Come on, then ; I am shut up as usual,' said good-natured Tom, as he thrust on his hat, and went out of the house with his sister.

Meantime Black Monday, ever ready to

accommodate his pace to the requirements of his skilful rider, has cantered freely over the short three miles that separate Pym Pastures from Charters, and Augustus Hawkwell is again at home.

Nobody would suppose from the appearance of Charters that it is a big place. It is only a two-storied house, and the rooms are not lofty enough to raise those stories to any altitude of dignity. From the road which meanders through the park, no view of the house is seen; its tall chimneys are not so tall as to rise above the clumps of grand old oaks which conceal them: but when the corner is turned round a sheltering knoll, the entire front of the house becomes suddenly visible, and the majesty of the place is at once apparent, not in its size, but in the time-worn dignity of its old grey bricks and mullioned windows, and in the general air of aristocratic antiquity which pervades it. The building itself forms three sides of a small, turfed quadrangle, the fourth being completed by a low wall surmounted by wrought-iron railings of a quaint design, flanking a high-arched gateway in the centre.

Almost everything about the place speaks in some manner of the Charters family. Their coat-of-arms is traceable here and there, variously quartered, in the crumbling stone; the doorway bears on its supporting columns the date 1521, and the initials C. C. of the Cheriton Charters, who built the present house at that date; an inserted stone in one wing has a similar memento of another Charters, who in a later year repaired and altered the house. Over the gateway is the Charters motto, and the quaint old legend—

‘Welcome within as bloom in May,
Come ye betimes and late away,’

which had aptly expressed the warm hospitality of the Charters for centuries. Essentially the place was shorn of much of its own dignity and interest when the family that bore its name ceased to be its owners. To own Charters was to own a fine old relic of Tudor architecture, a snug hunting quarter, and a finely-timbered park of, however, no great dimensions. A bachelor might live there without impressing the neighbourhood

with a sympathy for his loneliness ; he would have a certain local influence without being a county magnate, he might live in a modest style without being considered too economical. Such would be the position of a stranger owning the place, whilst to be a Charters of Charters was, as it were, to hold a patent of nobility.

Augustus Hawkwell was quite aware of these peculiar qualities in the estate when he had become its proprietor. It suited him to have such a place as he could retire to, and enjoy a comfortable obscurity in, should fortune frown ; whilst he was alive to the possibility of making it the scene of hospitalities welcome to his acquaintances and useful to himself, should prosperity still be his. A man of an educated and refined taste, he had been able during the course of his varied life to pick up at comparatively small cost a goodly collection of works of art, and he had found in this queer old house which he had purchased, a fitting place wherein to bestow his collection to advantage. Thus the interior bore no appearance of that nakedness of household gods, or of that

hasty furnishing which characterises so often the home of the new proprietor.

Lounging in the library at Charters on this sweet May afternoon, a cup of coffee at his elbow and the eternal cigarette between his lips, the great Augustus is lost in a reverie. And surely, if a material prosperity, a gratified taste, and a plethora of sleek luxury, can make a man happy, this reverie of his must be of a roseate order. The cool splashing of the little fountain in the quadrangle sounds soothingly on his ear through the open windows; books, newspapers, and periodicals are strewn about the tables; if he raise his eyes from his book, they rest on such objects as they have learned to take delight in: a fine bit of colour in silk tapestry from Genoa hangs over the doorway; a rug carefully selected by himself from a Persian caravan is on the oaken floor at his feet; cabinets of exquisite Japanese lacquer; choice bits of old china; quaint ivories and beautiful pieces of rare Venetian glass; a sketch or two in terra cotta from the studies of a friend in Florence, and little gems by Hobemer, by Cuyp, and Van der

Velde : such things as these make up the mellow tone of his choice surroundings. It is the refined luxury of an Epicurean's villa, more than the vigorous atmosphere of an English country house, that is apparent at Charters now ; but it is the luxury to which its present master has accustomed himself hitherto. His tastes have been of an urban sort, and he has no notion, because he has happened to buy a country house, of altering his tastes and ways to suit his house, of fussing about a head of game, of boring himself with magistrate's duties, and of otherwise aping the useful habits and manner of a country gentleman of the received type.

He will enjoy life in his own way, and if that way be selfish and somewhat useless to his neighbours, it causes him little or no concern. He has laboured, and still labours, in another field far harder probably than any of his neighbours, who sacrifice themselves so generously in gratuitous justice-giving, or social game-slaughter ; and he will take his hard-earned ease, untrammelled by any conventional patterns and examples to which they may expect him to conform.

So he exults in the possession of a nicely selected library, of a well-stocked cellar, a perfect cook, and of all the other adjuncts necessary to a well-appointed house ; and in the society of a few chosen friends, who visit him now and then from afar, is independent of the less cultured companionship of his sporting neighbours, and quite indifferent as to any contemptuous opinion they may form of his manner of life. If he choose to roam amidst the beautiful coverts in his park, he does so with a reckless disregard for the whirring flight of disturbed pheasants, and of the dismay of his keeper thereat ; if he join some shooting-party—and despite his indifference in such matters he is a very welcome addition to these gatherings, for his aim is true and his companionship pleasant—he joins the party solely for his amusement, cares little whether his score in the slaughter be great or small, cares more for the healthy tonic of a day in the open air, and the light flow of conversation between the beats that takes him out of himself. If he hunts, he rides some well-mannered, capable horse that will give him no trouble to ride, and that

will carry him over fences safely, and, as a matter of course. He cares only for the exercise and the fun of the thing, not at all for the bubble reputation of rash leaps on ill-disciplined or unskilled animals, or for the applause coveted by most of the hard-riding young fellows, his neighbours.

With ample means earned by his own enterprise and exertion, with none of those cares inherent to the possession of wife and children; with good health, good digestion, and comparative youth; with a mind sufficiently cultivated to avail itself of many of the resources offered by literature and art—this man lounging, enthroned in the temple of his own triumphant acquirements, should be happy, as far as mortals are capable of happiness, as far at least as material prosperity can contribute to that state!

And yet, and yet!—His book is lying idly on the floor at his feet, and his eye has that far-away gaze which tells that the thoughts too are wandering on scenes remote from those at hand, and the straight brow is straighter than usual, and betokens that his reverie is not all untroubled. He is thinking

of the sweet simplicity of life, so innocent, so fresh, so pleasant, which he has witnessed this morning at Pym Pastures. What an idyl it seems to him ! This peaceful home of brother and sister, who are all in all to each other ! Children in experience of the world's wiles and wickedness, knowing and coveting no pleasures but such as are provided bounteously for them in their beautiful home, and in their deep affection for each other ! playing together in the sunshine of security and innocence, unshadowed as yet by any darkness of the past, and only yet more brightened by the promise of the future !

No wonder Tom Gaythorne has no ambition ! No wonder such good things as he has seem enough for content ! And this honest, true-hearted boy, with his warm sympathies for dash and bravery, regards him, as he knows, with some fervent admiration, with such admiration as impulsive youth will lavish on its hero ! Ah, well ! did he but know how readily the hero would step from his pedestal and change places with his modest worshipper ! How this finished man of the world, this travelled expert, this

Napoleon of moneys, this apt scholar, would barter all his experience, all his knowledge, and his success—ah, how readily!—for the innocence and the ignorance, for the spotless past and hopeful future of Tom Gaythorne!

Well, well, Envy is but a poor prop to lean on. Not by her aid, not by a grudging contemplation of other men's successes or snug circumstances, has he managed to get on in life! If he has been guilty of the weakness of castle-building now and then, the castles have been for his own occupation, and have usually had about them some possibility of realisation. He has accustomed himself to be on the look-out rather for mundane finger-posts on the hard road of probability, however remote, than to be star-gazing for a visionary ladder to the clouds. This prosperous boy is only now entering on the ways of life, ways in which he himself is some fifteen years ahead of him on a journey that he has negotiated with a quick, an almost marvellous success! One day, perhaps, Tom Gaythorne too will have his sad experience to look back on—his grim skeleton hidden away in the cupboard! for, after all, success in life

must be purchased at *some* price; at the price of long years of patient toil and weary watchings and constant disappointments by many; while even by those apparently more favoured, for whom the struggle is short, the crown of victory is not so quickly or so cheaply won, but that some wounds will have been felt, some sore remain, to temper the gratification of success; some compunction, perhaps, for the sorrows of those who lie behind them on the battle-field, crushed, maimed, and vanquished in the selfish struggle.

Yet will Tom Gaythorne go into the world under greater advantages than he had. He had had nothing and nobody to rely on but himself; no pomp of position to be a lever for respect; no relations that he knew of, who would take the trouble to watch over his early career, or interest themselves in its rectitude; no such sweet and beautiful sister as this of Tom's to enshrine as a charm against evil in his heart; for whose sake all that was high and honourable would be worth seeking, of whose sympathy he might be sure, and whose spotless fame and innocence

would by contrast have made guilt and shame appear more hideous to him! Ah! if he had had such a sister as that, to whom he could have taken all his joys and hopes and doubts; whose ear would have been open to listen to his tales of difficulty, when he hesitated between the course suggested by the prick of conscience, and that urged by the goad of advancement; whose untainted judgment would have instinctively pointed out the right, and shamed him from the wrong! If only such an one had been about his path, how different might have been his lot, how pure his retrospect!

And yet, had he such a sister, would such a life as his have been one to which he dare have invited her attention? Must it not have been lived wholly apart from her life? Enshrined as she would have been in a spotless purity of circumstance, guarded as he would have been careful chivalrously to guard her from all sight, all rumour of evil, how could he have laid bare before her such a life as he, nay, such a life as too many men lead! Who, indeed, that has mingled in the throng of the world's fair, that has known its

gay-fronted allurements, its grim associations, its burning temptations, and come out like the many, not scatheless, dare confide his experience to such pure ears as these? What veriest schoolboy, back in his home after the first experience of school life, but feels already the sanctity of a sister's ear, and knows that he is entered for a struggle in all the ways of which she can bear no part of sympathiser!

And after all, years, long years ago had there not been some chance also for him of some such a Mentor as this? Out of the dim distance did no figure arise at times to vex him with a troubled face, to prick his conscience with a tale of wrong? Even now, as he thinks of it, a darker shadow seems to flit over his face, a sterner look to straighten his brow.

Bah! it was long, long ago! a man must have his experience, will make his little *faux pas*, and have to pay too, as had he not already paid, for his little peccadilloes and mistakes! It was a naughty world, no doubt, and men who were of it would know how to excuse those who had thoughtlessly

tripped on such little stumbling-blocks in the path as these! Only when he was alone would these gloomy spectres of old days come pushing themselves into his presence. With men about him, with business or pleasure on hand, he took a healthier view of life, and allowed himself no chance of lapsing into this morbid state of sentimentality and regret. He was living too much alone, that was the fact, and these idle hours down at Charters gave too much room for solitary musings and for these melancholy reviews of the soiled back numbers of his career!

Despite Tom Gaythorne's comfortable surroundings, and his guileless eye, business is business, and must be attended to. The postman will not wait while he ruminates, and advice of importance must be sent to his partner in town. So, at length, the great Augustus rouses himself from his dreamings, resolutely shakes off the impending fit of the blues, and going to his writing-table, jots a few words down on a telegraphic message form. These were the words:

‘From Augustus Hawkwell, Charters, to

Richard Smith, 10, Whittington Court,
Threadbodkin Street, E.C.

‘Buy two hundred Ottomans. Do not sell
more Lod rails, or Megath mines. I write by
post.’

This missive, out of which neither his
servant nor the local postmaster would be
able to extract much information, should
they be minded to give it their attention, he
took care to send off at once.

Then after busying himself with knit brows
for some hour or so in literary correspondence,
he took his fishing-rod, loosed a favourite
retriever from the kennel, and strolled down
the bank of the stream.

He walked some way, however, before he
found a place that tempted him to throw a
fly; and the place which he did select was
where his own right of fishing joined on to
that of Gaythorne. Had he any hopes
thereby of catching another glimpse of that
comely vision which had formed part of his
morning’s experience? Was this battered
man of the world enamoured, like a boy of
eighteen, of a pair of great blue eyes and a

musical voice, and was he fluttering in the neighbourhood of his enslaver, like the moth of constant tradition? Or were the best fish to be found only in the vicinity of Pym Pastures?

CHAPTER V.

PAINT-POTS.

GREAT RAINBOW STREET lies in dull, yet respectable, Bloomsbury. In years long gone by, before Mayfair and Belgravia became the recognised haunts of wealth and rank, its big neighbour, Muddleborough Square, was the abode of many people of social consequence, and even the extinguishers at its own portals were frequently in use to put out the flambeaux of fashionable personages, when balls, routs and other assemblages made gay its larger chambers. Since the days of all these merry doings, however, a change has come over its circumstance, and Great Rainbow Street, like a faded belle, can boast only of the triumphs of other years. Nevertheless, the advantage remains to it of

having been, so to speak, thoroughly well brought up ; an advantage of which it may be expected to still reap the profit, when its rivals of the hour will be crumbling in a stuccoed decay. The builders who put together its houses bestowed on it a care not always given to the more hastily constructed edifices of modern times. Its foundations are solid, its rooms, passages and staircases airy and well-proportioned ; its firm floors are evenly laid, do not warp into the undulating surface affected by green wood planks, and do not crack the ceiling beneath when walked over. Its cornices, finished with an exquisite taste in delicate relief, compare somewhat favourably with the heavily vulgar mouldings of a later date, whilst its mantelshelves are masterpieces of art. Its old mahogany doors swing ponderously on noiseless hinges, and latch with the faintest of clicks, whilst its windows move up and down at a touch, and are vigorously exclusive of draughts. When Fashion returns to Great Rainbow Street she will find it not impaired by age, just the same as when she left it to flirt with the more rickety tenements of

other districts; but meantime Fashion is quite off with the old love, and in the excellence of its buildings and the moderation of its rents, less wealthy folks have found a luxurious and a welcome retreat.

Glancing up at the first-floor windows of No. 19, on the south side in this said street, we notice that the lower part of the shutters are closed, with the intention, as we have no doubt, of cunningly controlling the light that flows into the room, and which circumstance our quick wit suggests denotes the laboratory of the painter.

As one ascends the wide oak-stair, sounds of melody are borne to our ear through the door of the first-floor front room :

‘ For men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for evarre, evarre, evarre ;
I go on for evarre.’

Our knock at the door is drowned in the shout of the songster, in his tuneful determination to go on for all time. ‘ Men may come, and men may ’ knock, the vocalist

within cannot hear them for the noise of his own music.

One might not be disposed to think it, but Mr. Cheriton Charters is 'at work' within. Men work, however, in various ways, and it is very frequently Cherry's way to give vent to the promptings of a light heart and a light conscience, in melody of this disjunctive and involuntary order, whilst his fingers, and his mind too, for that matter, are busy with the bold manipulations of his brush.

Everything about Cherry is of a large order. He is painting on a large canvas; his arm-chairs and tables, his clothes and his heart too, are all large and roomy, as is also the tobacco-jar, calculated to hold a hundred-weight or so of Bristol bird's-eye, which stands ready for a large circle of friends on his table. This room in which he paints, in which it may be said he lives, is large too, and littered with many familiar objects of old days: the portrait of his horse, the illustrious white-legged chestnut of other days; a few pictures, bits of china and so forth, bought in at the sale at Charters, and

on his breakfast-table, in a corner of the room, several favourite bits of old silver.

He has taken to painting in earnest now, has passed through the early drudgery of the schools, and is beginning to trust his own wings in flight.

Here, in Great Rainbow Street, he has found a place exactly suited for the building of his nest, and suited also to his means, which, saved only from the wreck of Charters, are as yet not large. Here he has brought his easel, his paint-pots, and his household gods, and here come pretty constantly some or other of his various friends.

A queer lot they are some of these friends of his, such, at least, as the conventional world would consider queer; strange-looking fellows, with a Bohemian contempt for the requirements of ordinary society in the way of costume; artists of visionary views whose unsold canvases proclaim the want of poetry in the people; literary men from the British Museum, with plenty to say about things not generally known; one or two wild young beings who have the effrontery to write

poetry for a matter-of-fact public ; now and then a successful painter with a good-natured criticism on his work, or a struggling dabbler who means to be a great painter in course of time. Or again will come men from another sort of world — young Guardsmen and Foreign Office clerks emancipated from the toils of the day, country gentlemen from his own county, old Etonians and Oxford chums : all are welcome, and dip into the capacious tobacco-jar, and make a very pleasant knot of genial society in Cherry's big studio.

Despite the disappointments and troubles which have come upon him, it is not an unhappy life which he leads. Sometimes, indeed, when he is hard at work and making way in his art, he wonders whether after all Fate has not been kinder to him than he had thought ; whether he would have been happier as lord of the old house and lands, with all the many cares its encumbered state would have entailed, than he is up here amongst his friends in Great Rainbow Street ; lord of his own hands, free to do as he likes, to go or come hither or thither, and with plenty of occupation for his time. After the

old house and lands it is of no avail to sigh. A new life lies before him, he has to carve out his own fortune and his own happiness; and, as he knows,

‘No man ere found the road to happiness by chance,
Or called it into being with a wish.’

‘Come in,’ he shouts, with his mouth full of brushes, in answer to a gentle knock at his door; ‘come in, by all means. Is that you, Muggins?’ he adds, without looking round the corner of his picture to see who is his visitor.

But it is not Muggins this time. There is a rustle of a dress, a light step on the old Turkey carpet, and Cherry is off his seat in a second.

‘I am so glad you have come, Mrs. George,’ he says, as he welcomes his model; ‘I am so glad you have come, for I was beginning to get rather out of my depth with my china-woman in your absence. See, she is beginning to wear a simper very foreign to the agonised expression I wish her to assume. The lay figure is all very well for draperies, but she won’t do everything, will she?’

Mrs. George smiled as she took Cheriton's hand, perhaps the honest warmth of his grasp of welcome was the nearest approach to a sense of friendship and sympathy, of which her rather hard lot gave her any experience during the day. She liked coming to the studio at No. 19, Great Rainbow Street, more than to the others which it was her custom to frequent. Cheriton's chivalrous bearing to all women made this one, who had in other days been no stranger to refinement and consideration, feel at once at home with him. She gazes for a few minutes at the growing picture, for though she is perfectly ignorant of the art of painting, though the part she plays in the manufactures of the artists who employ her is of the dullest, most passive order, still in this particular work of art of Cherry's she has taken much interest. Perhaps she is anxious for the success of her friend; perhaps the poetry of her disposition has been awakened by the nature of the subject.

But time is precious—hers, indeed, is sold by the hour—it won't do to assume the office of critic to the exclusion of that of the mere

model ; and soon the light is arranged, and Mrs. George is posed in the required posture on the stage.

Let us look at the model and at the great work itself.

Mrs. George then is posed in a stooping attitude, leaning in fact on a little table at her side, her eyes cast upwards as though gazing with a wistful look of entreaty, yet with anxious doubt, at an imaginary face, for the delineation of which we must turn presently to the canvas itself. The anxious look, the sad, weary expression, are so faithfully rendered, so readily assumed, that either this model must be a finished actress, or else the lines of her face are no strangers to being the chronicle of sorrow. Perhaps, if we had time to trace her history, we should come upon some darkened page that would account for the pale, thin face and the saddened eye ; perhaps we should find that the painters who sought her aid when they wished to make a representation of poverty and trouble set in a once comely face and form, only drew from nature when they made studies from the worn features of Mrs.

George. Be that as it might, it is not our province to search out her history here.

Let us turn to the large canvas on Charters's easel.

'It is nought, it is nought!' saith the buyer; 'but when he hath gone his way, then he boasteth.' Thus the true old proverb, so apt to the sharp dealings of the present period, as it was to similar transactions in the days of old.

Here by the window of a little dingy room stands a china-fancier of modern times, and he holds in the strongest light he can find, and critically examines, a small gem of old porcelain that is after his own heart. His greedy face half expresses his delight in the treasure which he has discovered, yet half depreciates its value. The painter has caught the subtle expression of the cunning purchaser with consummate skill. The meanness of the sordid transaction is made more apparent by the costly rings and other symptoms of wealth that are about the person of the over-reaching collector; whilst want and misery are depicted in the sparsely furnished little room, from whence, one by one, the dear

relics of a happier past are by degrees being sold : and leaning on the table is a woman, dressed in shabby black, and anxiously scanning the face of the proposing purchaser in eager anticipation of his fiat on the value of her little possession.

Such is the picture. Let us return to the artist and his model.

‘And you know Rome, do you, Mrs. George?’ Cherry is saying, for he generally carries on a light flow of conversation with his sitters, whoever they may happen to be, gaining unconsciously thereby a somewhat large fund of various information; for though his pictures as yet had been exceedingly few, such regular compositions, I mean, as might be dignified by the title of pictures, still he was in the habit of very constantly practising his hand and eye, and at the same time storing his portfolio with useful subjects, by making studies in chalk of different things and people, and one day he would find an itinerant musician in the streets and summon him to sit to him as a model; another day it would be a soldier perhaps, a policeman off duty, or a cabman enjoying the leisure of

misfortune; and as his genial habit was to converse quite freely with all these gentry, he was not infrequently rewarded by hearing strange details of manners and customs with which the upper ten is usually unfamiliar.

Perhaps Mrs. George too could tell him many things of interest with which she had met in the crooked places of her arduous course.

Never amongst his many studies of the features of men and women had Cheriton seen one face that interested him more, the lines of which showed more plainly the existence of a history, none the less sad because a secret one, than did the pale, worn lineaments of Mrs. George. But she of all his sitters was the last to babble of herself, perhaps from an apparently innate refinement of taste, perhaps because her tale was one she cared not to lay bare to a stranger's ears!

Be it as it might, Charters was not disposed to indulge an idle curiosity at her expense, and their conversation was always of the most general description.

'And you know Rome, Mrs. George?' Cheriton was asking, as we have heard.

‘Indeed I do,’ replied Mrs. George, with a wistful look in her eyes, as though some joyous memory lit up for a moment the dark page of her existence. ‘Indeed I do. I should be really ungrateful if I ever forgot Rome, for it was there I spent the happiest days of my life—days in which I knew not what it was to think of a care, and in which the gladness of my existence was only intensified by the anticipation of the morrow. Ah! how merciful a provision it is that we cannot all see that morrow! How— But pardon me, Mr. Charters, for rambling on in this foolish way, thinking aloud, in fact, a bad habit I have got into from being much alone, I suppose. And you—you have been at Rome, of course?’

‘Not as yet, Mrs. George,’ said Charters; ‘I must go some day, I suppose. It is considered so necessary to the education of a painter that he should see Rome, that I suppose nobody would believe in me unless I go there. One must go with the times, I suppose, to a certain extent, though for that matter I hold there is plenty to see in old England as well as Rome. But people don’t

care for a picture or for art of any sort unless it's at the other end of a journey and costs them some money to see. That is why they will rave about the glories of Rome and Florence, and all these art capitals, and yet leave the rooms at our own National Gallery almost deserted, I suppose. I dare say they know what they are about, and there's nothing to talk about—nothing, I mean, that gives them the dignity of the savant—after a visit to Trafalgar Square and a look at pictures which Dick, Tom, and Harry can see as easily and cheaply as they can themselves. I mean the works of the great painter Charters to be exhibited in no mere Royal Academy, where anybody can see them with others for twelvepence, but in some remoter corner of the town, where by payment of five shillings or by a little fuss of getting an order, perhaps, the fortunate may have a peep.'

Mrs. George laughed.

'The fortunate might be a fortunate few, might they not, Mr. Charters, if they had to take any trouble?'

'Precisely. That is what I should ex-

pect, but mark the effect! Tom, Dick, and Harry have all seen the pictures of the great swells at Burlington House. There is nothing about them which either can talk of to the other that has not been seen by all. But only Tom has seen Charters's great work, "A Storm on the Styx," and what is the result? "Ah, the Academy! Yes! of course one has done that!" says Tom, with conscious superiority. "The Academy is well enough. But have you seen Charters's 'Storm on the Styx'? No! Ah, you have a treat in store, then!" Tom is thenceforward a man of taste and of some information in the art world. Charters's Styx! Dick and Harry have not even heard of it. They too will master the recondite difficulty of seeing this gem, that is enshrined in some mystic quarter, and fenced about with the dignity of admission by order, so that they too may have something to say to other Dicks and Harrys. And so my picture becomes a celebrity, and the fame of the painter rises in proportion. That is how I am going to make a little sort of private Rome, you see, Mrs. George, in London—a Rome within the

reach of hansom cabs, so to speak. But the "Storm on the Styx" is not painted yet, I am sorry to say; and meantime I have plenty of other work on hand. No; I have not been to Rome or Florence or anywhere yet, much as I long to go. Tom, Dick, and Harry haven't induced the public to pay me high prices as yet for my works, as of course they will do; and so what with impecuniosity and one thing and another, I've been hitherto content to get my education as best I may in London. One can't do everything, can one?

'Indeed not! But you will go some day, and I think I can promise you you will enjoy it when you do go.'

'I hope so. I understand there are plenty of gentlemen of my craft there. Did you see any of them, Mrs. George—in this sort of way, I mean? Did you sit for a saint or anything of that sort?'

'Not as a saint, I fear—no! I sat for my portrait, though. That was my first experience as a sitter. I little thought then I should one day earn my bread by it. Oh, I seem to know every corner of Rome! it's

noble old ruins that you have heard all about of course, its galleries, and churches, and streets, all are so fresh in my memory. So bright a spot is it to me, that I seem to envy the very lazzaroni basking about under its glorious blue sky.'

'And you will go there again one of these days, no doubt, Mrs. George?'

'Never!' replied the model, with almost pathetic firmness.

Then there was a pause in the conversation, Charters feeling that it might be best to proceed with his painting in silence, rather than to go on talking on a subject in which, for aught he knew, he might be probing unhealed wounds, and Mrs. George herself apparently lost in the recollection of old scenes far remote from her present occupation.

'No,' she said, after a few minutes—'No, I never wish to see Rome again, much as I love the dear old place. There are bright spots in our lives, which it is well to keep untarnished by any associations of a less glad sort. I dare say you will agree with me, Mr. Charters, and appreciate what I mean, or you will perhaps some day when you know

what a possession one particular cherished time in your memory may be !

‘ Oh, I think I can follow you well enough, Mrs. George, already. I am a tolerably happy sort of person myself, I am thankful to be able to say. I take life as it comes, and don’t find that it comes much amiss, as a rule ; but still, if I do allow myself to think much of other days, there are little bits here and there that are very sacred to me. There’s an old place that I wot of, down in the country, for instance, that is full of all delightful recollection to me. I can never be there again in the same relation to it that I was before, and I don’t know that I care to think of it in any other light. A place, too, very dear to me—as dear, perhaps, as this old Rome of yours.’

‘ One never knows at the time how happy one is, I think,’ Mrs. George continued. ‘ It is only the prospect of good things that really delights us. How little I thought in days gone by of the happiness that was mine ! How I took almost as a matter of course the luxury and comfort that was my daily lot ! How little I thought then that

it was all so soon to end, and that I should have to earn my very bread as a model ! But I must not talk to you in this way. My personal affairs, even of those halcyon times, are of no interest to others ; and whilst I talk I am forgetting that I am a sitter, and I fear losing my pose.'

'You interest me, Mrs. George, believe me,' said Charters, good-naturedly ; 'I can well understand how you should like to dwell on those times when you were—"better off" shall I say ? Pray go on talking, I am at work on your hands just now, and the fact of your talking makes no difference whatever to their position.'

Charters was in fact really interested in the history of his model ; that she was not of the class to which her reduced means might lead superficial observers to suppose she belonged, he was certain. Many little signs of refinement and culture were evident to him as belonging to one of gentle birth, and without wishing to sound her in order to gratify his curiosity, he was still rather anxious to hear more of her story. But circumstances were against his hearing

more just now, at all events ; for there comes a loud knock at the door, and Cheriton, flinging down brushes and palette, grasps the hand of a friend, and brings this somewhat interesting conversation to an abrupt termination in welcoming one whom he calls 'Tom.'

'Hope I'm not disturbing you, Cherry!' says Tom Gaythorne, coming like a great gust of north wind, a rough piece of healthy country manhood, into this quiet temple of art and poetry, disarranging the folds of a carefully arranged drapery with his umbrella, and placing his hat haphazard on the top of the wet palette. 'Hope I'm not disturbing you. I found myself in town, so I thought I'd run in on you. Got hold of a hansom cab with such a chestnut mare as I haven't seen in harness since I don't know when, and so took half-a-crown's worth round the Regent's Park to study her paces more at my leisure. I thought of making the fellow an offer, that's the fact, but he wouldn't let me jump up and put my hands on the reins to try her, so the deal didn't come off. Well, how are you getting on? Paint away, old fellow; I won't disturb you!'

Of course he wouldn't ; his very presence harmonised, as may be supposed, extremely well with the subject Charters had in hand. On the whole, what with Mrs. George's nervous agitation, and the boisterous heartiness of his friend's presence, Cherry thought it might be well to adjourn the present sitting for a time.

'I don't think I'll trouble you any more to-day, Mrs. George,' he said ; 'we've got through some good work, and I can get on with some of the accessories for a time.'

And so the model went her way, trudging a long journey to a distant studio, where she was due to pose as the mother of the Gracchi in a grand historical painting, the ambitious work of a very rising young painter ; for Mrs. George's poses were rather various, and her appearances on the canvasses at the Royal Academy not infrequent ; here grandly heroic as Boadicea, or stately in the regalia of Queen Elizabeth, elsewhere bedecked in the garments of poverty as a beggar woman, or sorrowing by some blackened hearth in the first anguish of widowhood.

‘So that’s a model, Cherry, is it?’ says Tom Gaythorne, flinging himself into a copious easy-chair, and making himself quite at home as he, as in fact everybody, always did in Charters’s apartments. ‘I have often wanted to get behind the scenes with you artist fellows, and see how you manage to do the thing.’

‘And there isn’t much to see after all, is there, Tom?’

‘Not that conveys much information I confess, to me. It all looks exceedingly difficult, but I suppose it’s easier when you get into the way of it, like everything else. Like Finance, for instance; that was always such a sealed book to me till I got put in the way of it. I say, Cherry, I’m making a fortune; that’s what I’m up in town about. Business, you know—stocks, shares, and that sort of thing.’

‘What! you, Tom, dabbling in the money-market?’

‘I, Tom, dabbling in the money-market. You wouldn’t think it of me, would you?’

‘I’d be careful about that if I were you, Tom. It’s a dangerous thing to play with,

and you will burn your fingers one of these days.'

'Oh! "burn my fingers" indeed; not I. I've learnt a thing or two about it all in the last few months, and I've got a friend who is thoroughly up to all the moves of the game, and lets me know when I may safely do a good thing. What do you think now—I've netted two hundred pounds in the last few days simply by keeping my eyes and ears open!'

'Very likely, my dear Tom,' said Cheriton; 'that's always the way at first, and then you lose two thousand another day. Take my word for it, you won't make a fortune that way.'

'Ah! you are such a prudent old party, but I know what I am about. It's not rash speculation, or anything of that sort. I've got right good information to go on. Look here, it's the simplest thing in the world, and I don't mind telling you something about it. You'll make more by that than by picture-painting, Cherry, all deference to your talents all the same. This is how I have managed it. I bought some foreign railway shares a

few weeks back—never mind the country they belonged to, that is neither here nor there. They were very low, dirt-cheap you know, and so I knew I couldn't hurt myself by investing an odd hundred or two as a venture. A man I know, who is up in these sort of things, told me he thought they were too low as he called it, and, if something or another happened, the public confidence in the scheme would be revived, and the shares would go up. Sure enough something, whatever it was I don't pretend to know, did happen, and the public confidence was revived. Up went my railway shares, and I sold them for, I won't say how much more than I gave for them.'

'And supposing something or another had not happened!'

'Oh, one must risk something, of course. Nothing venture, nothing have. Besides, I know I am in wonderfully good hands with the fellow who advised me to buy.'

'It's speculation all the same, Tom.'

'Oh yes, in a way I suppose it is; so is one's book on the Derby. There's an element of sport in it, that's the fact, Cherry, and I

like the excitement of the thing ; only it's twice as safe as betting on a race, you know, especially if you're in good hands.'

'And who is the Fidus Achates that is taking care of you, Tom ?'

'Well, I didn't mean to mention names, but, of course, it's not like publishing it if I tell you. It's no other than Hawkwell, of whom you wot ! He's a good fellow, I find, is Hawkwell, Cherry. You'll be glad to know the old place is in good hands. Good shot — good at most things, as far as I can see !'

'He's been good at managing his own affairs, at all events, Tom ; I only hope he will do as well for you !'

All the same Charters was not without misgivings for his friend. He of all people had reason to dread the fruits of rash speculation. But he knew it was of no use administering a lecture on prudence to Tom Gaythorne, flushed as he was now with this early success. If he would but confine his ventures to the risking of only a few hundreds, perhaps no great harm would come of it one way or the other. Anyhow Gaythorne was clearly of no mind to have his

good fortune depreciated by any wise saws of prudence, and if his friend was not disposed to give him the congratulations he looked for, it might be as well to drop the subject for another.

‘Now don’t croak, Cherry, there’s a good fellow,’ he said; ‘I have lodged two hundred clear, and you look as down in the mouth as if I had lost it instead. How’s art? And what is the picture all about? Oh, I see, Mrs. George, as you call her, posed as the poor widow, eh! And what is the chap doing with the mug in the corner?’ Cheriton explained the bearings of the subject as well as he was able, but it must be owned that Tom Gaythorne’s nature was not of such a poetic order as enabled him quite readily to grasp the pathos of the situation.

‘Then he’s buying the mug is he, Cherry!’

‘That is his intention, yes! The old lady, you see, is extremely poor, and is obliged to sell her treasures.’

‘Well, if he’s buying, and she wants to sell, what on earth is she looking so unhappy about? It seems to me the thing is going as smooth as possible. I don’t understand

these things, you see. I dare say it's all right, but I should have painted her in wild spirits, don't you know; in fact running off for another mug as quick as possible. I am not artistic, I am afraid, am I? I never for the life of me can see any beauty in those statues and black daubings of what you fellows call "the old masters." This is what you call "High art," I suppose now, isn't it? It's all very well, but I should have thought something in the sporting way would have been more in your line, Cherry; a run with the hounds, or something of that sort.'

'I am afraid you are talking terribly grim truth, old fellow,' said Charters, laughing.

'Of course I am; why don't you do that sort of picture, then? I know I for one would much sooner look at a picture of a level pack settling to their work in the open, with one or two fellows getting well away with them, or taking a header or two over a big fence, than I would at all this widow business that makes one unhappy to gaze at.'

'Yes, but the public, Tom! the public! they are not all sportsmen, you see; and this is the sort of thing, so I flatter myself at

least, that will draw their attention. You see we poor struggling disciples of art are the slaves of our empty purses, and paint our pictures, not for the fun of the thing, but in order that we may sell them. If you take the trouble to study the taste of the multitude, as evinced at our picture galleries, you will observe it is subject that attracts them ; and they like subjects with which they are to some extent in sympathy. I tried the classical high-art plan at first. Painted Medea in all the poetic grandeur of her frenzy, about to give vent to her feelings in the murder of her children. It was a magnificent conception, wasn't it ? And a truly great work, believe me. Of course if one lived in a country where the Government was properly awake to a sense of its responsibilities in the matter of elevating the minds of the people by means of art, one should be encouraged to persevere in that ennobling style ; some snug subsistence should be provided for us, so that we might be able to work for art's sake, careless of all mere sordid ambition, free from all the meaner troubles of making pecuniary ends meet, and devoted

only to producing splendid paintings. Alas! we live in stern times; our Government is more concerned for the material comfort of the masses than for the elevation of its mind, and meantime one has to tot up the prosaic housekeeping accounts, and exercise oneself about such trivialities as the meeting of our tailor's bill. The Academy rejected my Medea, blind to their opportunities, and so I thought of giving them something the public were more familiar with this time.'

'Well, you seem to flog away at an awful pace at all events, Cherry,' said Gaythorne, as he watched Charters great bold sweeping style of painting.

'Yes! I do get along rather fast; that wouldn't matter, of course, if I combined accuracy with pace, or if I were engaged to paint by the yard. As it is, fellows maliciously tell me I have mistaken altogether my branch of the profession, which should have been that of the house-painter.'

The picture of Medea was indeed no very great achievement, a somewhat theatrical-looking virago, frowning unutterable things, and capable apparently of any crime or mis-

demeanour known to the Newgate calendar. Cherry was clearly conscious of the absurdity and humour of the production, for the margin of the cartoon from whence he had painted it was covered with caricatures of this awful looking person ; and if he had drawn on a frightful imagination in order to produce so threatening and forbidding a countenance, it was satisfactory to find the same person being run in by the police in the margin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GAY WORLD.

It is leafy, joyous June, and the London season is at its height. Away in the country nature is wearing the fairest of all the fair garbs with which she is clothed throughout the changing year; things animate and inanimate everywhere combining to swell the great triumph of their glad existence, and yielding to the sweet influence of the glorious sun. Deep, shady woods sparkle with the brilliant green of oak and lime and beech, and resound with the soothing murmur of the bees, the gay cry of the cuckoo, and the wild, sweet note of thrush and blackbird. Hedgerow and lane are spangled with dog-roses, elder-flower, foxglove, and all the lovely trappings of this carnival of wild nature's prime. Lovely days are succeeded

by yet more lovely nights, in which the cooled air is sweet with the perfume of the new-mown hay, and the stillness of the moonlit lawn is broken only by the trill of the nightingale, and the faint whisperings of the rustling leaves.

And yet at this most charming time of the year the wealthy owners of trim gardens and luxuriant woodlands have foregone the joys of seeing their flower-beds grow bright with blooming plants, and of reclining, like Tityrus of Latin-Grammar fame, under the shade of their beech-trees—have denied themselves, in fact, the enjoyment of their great possessions, when opportunity has most to offer, and betaking themselves instead to the dust and glare and heat of London, are yawning in bored dignity on the benches of the House, or paling their weary faces in the stifling atmosphere of overcrowded drawing-rooms. It is certainly one of the noblest examples of self-sacrifice, this abandonment of country luxury for the irksome toil of law-giving, and a splendid spirit which animates the worn mothers and daughters of fashion, causing them to prefer a Brahmin immolation

in the stuccoed vaults of town to the free space of their country homes, so long as the business of the nation directly or indirectly confines their lords in a like entombment.

Yet even up here in hot London there are spots which art and nature have combined to make lovely, and a chair in the Lady's Mile in Hyde Park at 12.30 p.m., thinks Augustus Hawkwell, is no bad thing when the season is at its height ; when the fine flowers and semi-tropical vegetation, that have grown up at the bidding of wealth and skill, with the human flowers of beauty and fashion for the admiration of mankind.

Augustus Hawkwell is a philosopher. Attired in the thinnest of grey frock coats, with a white hat placed rather forward to shade his eyes, and with an umbrella over his head to temper the heat of the too scorching sun, he is lounging at ease, in company with other gallants, his acquaintance, in the most crowded part of Rotten Row. For a fractional outlay he has secured for himself a seat that he is wise enough to consider superior, on this broiling June day, to a saddle, even though it were on the back

of that apparently faultless animal, Black Monday.

Thus seated, he is careless of the searching eye of any critics of horseflesh who might vex him with their scrutiny were he otherwise mounted. Clean, guiltless of spavin, splint, or curb, and, as it may most truly be said, as hard as iron are the legs of his lowly chair, which with these advantages combines that of a perfect steadiness of demeanour and a ready facility for mounting or dismounting, whenever the occasion of a passing friend may invite its rider to change his position. Lounging thus in this luxury of well-ordered repose, like Diogenes, that Sybarite of old, who so thoroughly understood the advantage of an undisturbed tub, he is able to appreciate in comfort the passing humours of the fair; and they are many.

It is Saturday afternoon, and the toiling world has come forth to bask in the haunts and share the frivolities of more leisured fashion. Wearied members, who have sat through the week on dull committees, and weary counsel, who have been contributing to the weariness of the members, loll idly on

the chairs in full enjoyment of their emancipation. Commerce at large lounges about indolently here and there, as though there were no such places as the counting-house or the Stock Exchange, and revels in that temporary dandyism for which the early-closing movement gives opportunity. Young fellows from Aldershot and the universities, already quite 'men about town' on the strength of a couple of balls and a course of the theatres, swagger about with the easy assurance of their years and training, and point out to each other the celebrities of the day.

'That's Lady Mabel Fitzblazonry, you know, that woman in sky-blue,' says Tom of the 180th to Dick of Bottlenose College. 'They say Thingummy of the Blues wanted to marry her, and old What's-his-name—you know the fellow I mean—put the duke up to a thing or two about Thingummy's debts and what not, and so it didn't come off. And there was a row, don't you know, between Thingummy and the other fellow about it.'

Oh, the irresponsible 'they'! what wondrous tales are put into their mouth!

And Dick says :

‘No, my dear fellow, you’ve got hold of the wrong end of the story; it was the other fellow who wanted to marry Lady Mabel, and then, you know, this fellow in the Blues got hold of——’ and so on. Showing that these two are after all but indifferently read in their *Vanity Fair* or other journal of personal information, from whence no doubt they have culled the tale about this lady in sky-blue, who, by the way, happens not to be Lady Mabel at all, but only the elaborately dressed daughter of a wealthy and respectable drysalter. And the drysalter, too, himself is to be seen, riding with a not assured seat an animal worth some four or five hundred guineas, whilst my lord of eighteen descents jogs comfortably on a modest cob, in an ill-brushed hat and a pair of cotton gloves, his groom behind him, to be sure, supporting the dignity of the family (and his lordship’s umbrella) in the undoubted quality of his mount, and in the superlative fit of his snowy buckskin breeches.

And soon in this panorama of wealth and fashion, of fair women and brave men, appears a young and lovely girl, cantering

easily down the ride, on a bright bay horse that seems almost conscious of the beauty it carries, and proud of the notice he or his mistress, or both together, attract; for many hats are snatched from men's heads, and there is a buzz and a movement in the well-dressed crowd. Some few rise from their seats in order to have a look at one of whom the world is talking, or to seek a glance of recognition for their homage of admiration. And Dick and Tom, those knowing boys of whom we spake anon, are ready to tell each other all about her, as ever.

‘What a bay!’ says Dick.

‘Ah! and what a woman!’ says Tom. ‘She’s a Mrs. Vansilver,’ he adds: never at a loss is Tom. ‘She’s a Mrs. Vansilver, an American woman: lots of tin, they say. I met her at a ball the other night. Quite a new thing, you know, Dick; only appeared this season, and yet people are fussing about her already. Wonderful how we gush nowadays, isn’t it! A woman is admired by some fellow or another, and the world doesn’t take the trouble to look for itself. It’s content to accept the fact that she’s

lovely, and admire what it's told to admire. She is niceish-looking, all the same, is Mrs. Van, isn't she ?

And very likely Mrs. Van is niceish-looking, as this man of the world and of taste is good enough to say of her ; only the lady in question is at this moment not even in Rotten Row, but visiting a sister down at Peckham, and the niceish-looking person on the bay is no other than Lucy Gaythorne.

And were it not for that astute remark of Tom of the 180th, as to the way in which the world is quick nowadays to recognise and run wild about this or that particular beauty, the reader might with justice cry out on me that Miss Gaythorne, only last May a country girl, unknown beyond the sphere of her own provincial surroundings, could hardly thus early and almost at once have created such a stir in the great world of London, as that hats should be flying from heads in this manner, and people be so eager to behold, as she comes cantering through the Park.

Yet so it was. The freshness of her loveliness had made an early and a wide conquest ;

and in little more than a month after brother Tom, elate with successful venture, had taken a house in Pink Street, Mayfair, and had launched his sister for a London season, under the protection of Aunt Hester—in a very few weeks, I say, after this event, men, and women also, had begun to talk of her to each other as the prettiest *débutante* of the year, and the ball-givers, dinner-givers, drum-holders of society had begun to feel that the success of their entertainments was enhanced by Miss Gaythorne being of their parties.

Perhaps it was her native grace of carriage and the natural freshness of her beauty that had led men and women captive. There was an absence of all art, of all consciousness of power, in Lucy's manner and appearance. She would say the most simple things in the simplest way, and throw glances about here and there from those wondrous great eyes, without the shadow of an intention of doing mischief amongst the hearts about her, even though she could not but be conscious, as I have said in a former chapter, of the size and brilliancy and wondrously deep blue of those

eyes of hers ; and her laugh was so ready and so joyous, so flattering to the person whose waggery had induced it, and her features so mobile, so readily tell-tale of her disposition, that it was no wonder these accessories to a beautiful face and figure should gain her some notice and admiration.

So it was, at all events, that she had come like an impersonated gladness amongst the careworn devotees of pleasure, and had given a zest to their amusements, a fresh colour to their playthings which they were fain to acknowledge and appreciate.

There seemed to be no care, no sadness where Miss Gaythorne happened to be. She was so delighted with everything and everybody, so quick to see only the bright side of things and people, that her innocence and enjoyment seemed to be contagious, and the yawning bored ones began to see light and life also in what had been before but a mere monotony of pleasure.

Like Robin Adair of song, the fascination of her presence had power to give a mysterious gaiety to ball, concert, and other social gathering. Whilst she was fleet of

foot, and almost part of the music itself in the dance, a pursuit of which she was especially fond, she knew how to hold her own in more active pleasures; and, in a short plain dress, would handle a racquet on the lawn at Prince's with any lady, with many men indeed, in the club, and that with such grace and skill as would draw a knot of admirers under the old elms to watch her, a knot of whose presence, let us say, she would be utterly unaware, so great her ardour, so thorough her enjoyment of the game.

To say that the popularity of this young and beautiful person, however, this bewitching, laughter-loving companion, was universal, would be to invite my readers to the contemplation of a too wholly improbable phenomenon; for in this imperfect world of ours it is too well known that greatness will have its detractors, and that to be successful is to breed envy. Hence, then, it were no wonder that many ladies should seek to depreciate the worth of this gem which society had discovered, either by stoutly denying its value in a chorus of comfortable accord

amongst themselves, or by merely 'damning it with faint praise' in circles where the current of opinion was too strongly set in its favour.

For the present, however, our gay young *prima donna* has it all her own way on the stage of life, moving about only in accord with the poetry and music of its orchestra, and elate with the goodwill and applause of a vast audience.

She is young, jubilant, and victorious ; the prospect of life is in a halo all *couleur de rose*, as illuminated by the blaze of the foot-lights, and as yet it is no time to think of that sombre green curtain which must sooner or later descend and awake her to a sense of the hard cold grey of reality.

'Oh yes ! she is pretty ! I suppose, at least, one would call her pretty. Not quite my style of beauty, you know ; but still I can understand people seeing something to admire. Good eyes, well, yes, and good complexion—at present, that is ; wait till she has been in town a little longer ; the wear and tear of the season plays havoc with good complexions of that fresh, bumpkin sort, don't you know !

But after all, who is she, Hyacinth? Does anybody know where she has come from, or anything about her? As far as I can make out, nobody seems to know anything about either her or her belongings. Mr. Hawkwell! Oh! Mr. Hawkwell takes a great interest in the family, I know. I believe Mr. Hawkwell asked me to put their names on my list. Well, well! Mr. Hawkwell is all very well. He's a bachelor: one needn't be too particular about bachelors, when they are distinguished-looking, and amusing, and so on. But what would you? the girl seems to go about everywhere now, and I'm too good-natured to refuse anything.'

Thus old Lady Portcullis, a great lady of fashion, of the bluest blood herself, and wife to a peer of an immensely long pedigree; to whose yellow-faced and somewhat over-plump daughters, not the most carping critic could truthfully impute either a bumpkin freshness of complexion or a too angular slimness of figure.

And Hyacinth Heartsease, to whom the foregoing remarks were made, had replied that really he had no information to give

about the ancestry either of Mrs. Proctor—which was Aunt Hester's name—or of her niece. All he knew was that Miss Gaythorne was out and away the prettiest girl in town, and, as far as he could see, both aunt and niece were as clean thoroughbred as any other ladies in society. For little Heartsease was not by any means a bad fellow, and his exceedingly well-made clothes and general dandified style were always subordinate to the promptings of as good a heart as was to be found among those good fellows, the clerks of Her Majesty's Foreign Office.

But meantime, whilst I am thus digressing, the young fellows in the Park are feasting their eyes on that best of all spectacles, a beautiful woman in a well-made habit and on a shapely horse—feasting their eyes, and making their comments to each other.

‘How well she sits!’ says one.

‘Never saw her looking better, never! By Jove, there's nothing like a riding-habit for a woman who can ride!’ says another.

‘She's glorious in a ball-dress all the same!’ sighs sentimental young Damask,

who cherishes the delusion that Lucy's bright eyes looked languishingly into his own the other night at some festive gathering, where, in truth, they had unintentionally assumed the same expression towards all her partners.

'She's slap up—rides like blazes, and looks nailing well in all rigs!' exclaims downright Jack Bounce of the Grenadiers, whose vocabulary, let us own, is not of the poetic sort; 'looks nailing well in all rigs, I tell you, and can do any mortal thing. Poor Damask essayed to play lawn-tennis with her at Prince's the other day, and she gave him no end of a dressing—eh, Damask? I put some tin on you, old man, for that game, because you told me you could play; but it was worth losing it to see the handsome larruping you got. I don't believe you *can* play a bit, you know. I believe *I* could give you points, and I'm quite sure Miss Gaythorne could.'

'She's got a quick eye, no doubt,' says Damask.

'Eyes! I believe you! She's got clinking good eyes, and six inches or so of lash

on 'em to boot. I'm told she toppled into the fire-grate and burnt 'em when she was a babby or something, that's what makes 'em so long. Where's Hawkwell? he knows all about 'em. Didn't she singe her eyelashes, Gus? I'm told so!

Hawkwell meantime has not much exerted himself either to gaze at the subject of this disjointed conversation or to make remarks thereon; his chair is comfortable, the shade of his umbrella grateful, and the small-talk of these young fellows about him rather amusing to him. Why should he bestir himself to gaze or talk now, when he knows that he is engaged to drive quietly down to Twickenham in the cool of the evening with Miss Gaythorne and Mrs. Proctor? Let these hot-headed impulsive boys chatter of her, and crane and struggle to see her out here in the sun and dust, or vie with each other for the honour of a dance or the rapture of a glance in the bustle of a ball-room! For him is reserved an intercourse of greater repose, for this evening at least. The comparative seclusion of a few hours' drive in the easiest of

barouches, and a quiet talk on the moon-lit terrace of Orleans House.

‘I’m always late,’ says Lucy, running into the pretty drawing-room in Pink Street, about half-past five o’clock in the afternoon, and giving him a tiny hand in a dainty glove. ‘I’m always late; but I see Aunt Hester is not down yet after all. I suppose she’s making a tremendous toilette! Tell me, Mr. Hawkwell, will I do? I’ve never dined at the Orleans before, and I don’t know what people wear there!’

Lucy was not fishing for compliments, you may be sure; she asked the question in the most natural way in the world, because she wanted to know, and because she conceived Mr. Hawkwell could give her the desired information.

Would she do! Jack Bounce in the Park had said she looked “nailing well in all rigs;” and Hawkwell recalled that elegant remark as he wondered whether even in the close-fitting riding-habit she looked more lovely than in this dainty, yet simple, costume of pale coral. He couldn’t say what people wore on these occasions; he

never noticed ; what he felt sure of was that her costume was so becoming to her, that even ladies could only look with admiration, however much they might cherish a triumphant sense of being more dressed than Miss Gaythorne.

‘ I hope I’ve not done wrong in asking a young man to make a fourth to our party ? ’ says Hawkwell. ‘ I thought you would take mercy on him, perhaps, and give him a seat in the carriage. Three is rather an awkward number, is it not ? And I knew there would be no chance of catching Tom in town.’

‘ Tom ! I should think not. He’s soldiering with his yeomanry, I believe ; or if not that, he’s busy with his hay. Dear old Tom takes very good care to see as little of London as possible ; besides, you might have too much of us in such a family party, don’t you think ? ’

‘ Can’t see too much of your family, you know, Miss Gaythorne, though perhaps it would be rather a domestic gathering. So Tom can’t stand town ; and how do you like it after all, now you have seen something of the gay world ? ’

‘I think it’s simply delightful. I never was so happy in my life. Of course, you know, the country is charming, and we are missing the best of it. Green leaves, hay-fields, flowers and all that, no doubt, are very nice, only they are not very exciting, are they? I confess the gay and giddy world, that your pastoral poets are so fond of flinging stones at, is a thing worth seeing, to my mind, and runs the joys of rural retirement rather a closeish race. Last year, you know, I used to hug the notion that there was nothing in the world so sweet as the prospect of Pym on a sunny summer’s morning, and nothing so delicious to listen to as the song of lark, and blackbird, and nightingale, and all the troup of warblers. And so they are delightful, and Pym is the dearest spot in the wide world; but, somehow, just for a change, give me a box in the grand tier, with Patti or Albani in the “Sonnambula.” It’s an awful sentiment that, isn’t it, though? I am afraid I’m becoming worldly. Tom would denounce me for a traitor; but I’m afraid poor Pym is nothing to me compared to London in the season, with plenty of people

to be seen and heard, and lots of fun going on everywhere.'

'And plenty of people to see and hear, and fall prostrate in consequence,' suggested Hawkwell. 'Of course, if a young lady leaves a quiet, yet otherwise lovely and delightful home, such as Pym, and coming to town leads society captive all at once, and makes a triumphant progress about the world, smashing poor fellows' hearts, and putting the nose of hitherto celebrated beauty out of joint—of course, I say, if poor Pym has to contend against such odds as these, it has to go to the wall.'

Upon which Lucy laughed, and told him not to be a goose, and asked who was his friend that was coming to dine with them. And it must perhaps be owned that the incense of flattery had begun to be not without its charm to this young woman, who was after all, though the heroine of my tale, a mortal person only, and subject to like weaknesses and shortcomings as the rest of her sex, and who could not but be aware that her appearance on the stage of society had been a marked success, or be entirely innocent

of a slightly intoxicating sense of triumph and power.

‘I’m not a goose. I’m speaking only truth, and if you heard one half the things people are saying of you, I should tremble lest you should become vain. As to my friend, he is one Humphrey Limpet, of some line regiment or another ; a nice young fellow enough, but rather shy in society at present. I hope you will have mercy on the poor boy, and not send him back to Sandhurst, or wherever he performs his martial function, to pine away in a wasting passion. Indeed, lest the poor fellow should suffer such a hurt, I had designed that he should devote himself to Mrs. Proctor. He is giddy with a sense of fashion in coming with us at all, and, as his ambition is fired, I think your good-natured aunt might give him a little help in making his way into society. It is rather thoughtful and considerate of me, don’t you think so ?’

‘Oh, very! but I mean to defeat your good intentions. I love soldiers, you know !’

‘Of course you do ! and a very proper passion too, and one that stirs our soldiery to the valiant deeds that has made England

what she is. And you will hear all the news of Sandhurst too, and all about the misconduct of affairs by the military authorities, who don't know what a man they have in Limpet. I can't cope, you know, with the attractions of the army——

‘Of which you are extremely jealous,’ interposed Lucy.

‘Just so; I will therefore lay myself out to make myself agreeable in my humble way to Mrs. Proctor instead; that was my object, as you have no doubt rightly guessed ere now, in organising our little expedition! Here comes your aunt, I think, and that is Limpet hammering away at the knocker, I expect. How do you do, Mrs. Proctor? So good of you to come down with me to-day; I only hope that the fresh air of the riverside will repay you for a long dusty drive. Ah, Limpet! late as usual! Let me present you; this is Captain Limpet, Mrs. Proctor—oh! not captain yet, eh?—Mr. Limpet, then, of the 60th, isn't it?’

‘Of the 180th.’

‘Of course, the 180th. I ought to have remembered.’

It is worth while living in London in

order to appreciate fully the relief of getting out of it into the country. Few things are more delicious than that feeling of exhilaration which is induced by inhaling fresh air, after our lungs have been long accustomed to the close atmosphere of town ; and we are hardly aware in what a roar of tumultuous sounds we have been living until the soft stillness of the fields and woodlands so sweetly soothes our battered ears as to make it a real pleasure, if I may use the paradox, 'to listen to the silence.'

This drive down to Orleans House was all a new experience to Lucy Gaythorne, and all delightful—one more drop of pleasure in a cup that was already brimming, yet apparently of a boundless capacity. The road was entirely novel to her, for her path westward had hitherto not extended beyond Queen's Gate, and she had never even seen the russet walls of Kensington Palace, or the vistas of stately elms that form its beautiful setting. There was something to her of the old country town about the streets of Kensington itself, and when Holland House came in sight, majestic in its anti-

quity, and looking proudly contemptuous of the pretensions of its stuccoed neighbours, she stopped the carriage and begged to be allowed time to enjoy a prospect so delightful to her.

Soon they were on Hammersmith Bridge, and saw the river sparkling in the sun, and gay with the light pleasure-craft of Saturday afternoon, and by degrees trees became greener, fields fresher, and they were almost in the country itself.

Meantime, she had been able to appreciate all these sights that were so novel to her, without her pleasure being alloyed by the exigencies of conversation ; for Augustus Hawkwell, perhaps with a view to a temporary neglect hereafter, perhaps with a consciousness of the importance of being universally acceptable, was taking great care to make himself agreeable to Mrs. Proctor, and Mr. Limpet, after a few desperate essays at conversation with Lucy, had resigned himself to the less troublesome and perhaps more profitable rôle of listener, and thus Lucy was able either to attend to Augustus Hawkwell's remarks to her aunt, or to revel in the undisturbed enjoyment of the scenes about her.

Augustus Hawkwell has become a great favourite with Mrs. Proctor; he is always attentive to her, and has the tact to enhance her sense of importance, instead of allowing her to feel that she occupies only the place of a necessary encumbrance as Lucy's chaperon. Thus he has now and then made a point of calling in Pink Street at times when, it being known that Lucy is not in the house, the call can only be considered as intended for her aunt; and at such times he will manage to talk only on such subjects as will induce that lady to discourse freely, and to delight herself with a consciousness of conversational powers of which she had not hitherto suspected herself to be possessed; and now and then stalls or a box at the opera are placed at her disposal; or he will drop in at Pink Street just in time to accompany the ladies to church. Once or twice he, knowing Aunt Hester's love for art, has succeeded in getting the *entrée* to a few studios, after much exertion on his part, as would appear, or to a few great private collections, and to these resorts he will take care to conduct Mrs. Proctor in person, and to act as her cicerone—no bad

one either, for his taste is particularly good—even though her niece be unable or unwilling to be of the party.

‘He’s charming, Lucy, quite charming!’ Aunt Hester says. ‘Not like most of the frippery young men one meets about. He’s got something in him, has seen much, and has plenty to say for himself. I like him amazingly.’

‘Yes, they are very fascinating, these trim villas, are they not?’ he is saying, as their road becomes bordered with the smooth lawns and fragrant rhododendrons of suburban London. ‘They are very fascinating, no doubt; but the charm is delusive if one has to live in them. You can have your own poultry, and your own cow, flower-garden, and so on! Yes, that is so true; and be out of all the smoke and noise and the dirt of town, and yet be within a drive or a short railway journey of all that is going on in the world. And your friends can so easily run down too, and see you! So they can; and so, I am very sure, they would in your case. All that is very true. But, believe me, the experiment is not found to be a successful one by

most people—by people, I mean, who, like yourself for instance, have been accustomed to society. I know so well how matters go. There was a young couple of my acquaintance, a year or two ago, for instance—he was a younger son of good family, and she was one of the Bucolicshire Strains, a niece of Lord Lineage, don't you know? Well, these young people had more love than money to live on, and so they conceived the notion that a pastoral existence would be found cheaper, and be more suitable for baby's health, than life in town. Unfortunately Corydon was obliged, by the exigencies of his position as bread-winner, to be within sound of Big Ben every day, and so there was nothing for it but the suburbs. And, after many weary journeyings and house-huntings, they took The Dahlias, a rather pretty cottage not far from the Thames. It was all poetry and primroses at first, you may be sure. "They couldn't conceive," they said, "how people could be such fools as to live in London!" Here was Corydon eating his morning egg—a really new-laid one—with an appetite, and running up to

Waterloo, or Paddington, or somewhere, with a flower in his button-hole ; and Phyllis, in a cotton frock, spending ecstatic mornings amongst her roses—just for all the world, only on a smaller scale, as she used to do down in Bucolicshire. Then, there was a boat on the river ; and the children kept tame rabbits—and, indeed, I'm not sure there wasn't a pony-carriage of some sort.

'It was all very well for a time ; but now and then Corydon happened to miss his train in the morning, and thus upset his business arrangements, whatever they were ; and now and then, also, in the evening, and thus upset his temper by spoiling his dinner. And, moreover, it would happen that Phyllis would find the day just a little long, without seeing her friends ; or, if the friends came down, they would fuss about, watch in hand, anxious all the time about their train ; and Corydon also began to miss his club, and other social advantages.

'Then, too, the society about them was found to be constructed on strictly plutocratic principles only. The proprietor of The Pineries—an eminent grocer or some-

thing in town—was considered too large a personage to do otherwise than patronise the mere denizens of The Dahlias.

‘By degrees my poor friends became out of conceit with doing pastoral at The Dahlias. How I used to pity the poor young couple! And how I used to see through their struggles to believe themselves fortunate, and to get their friends to think them so! They would try and get me also to lose my tail now and then when I went down to see them, lauding the beauties and pleasures of the neighbourhood; and especially pointing out to me the fact that “The Nutshell”—a bijou bachelor residence—was to be let.

‘Well, to make a long story short, before they had been out of town two years, there was a house-agent’s board exhibited on their lawn. And poor Corydon talks to me at the club now and then of the venture only with a shudder, and assures me that nothing would induce them to exchange the luxury of London again for all the dismal delights of The Dahlias.

‘It seems to me young people can have all they want at The Orleans here, when

they are tired of town. A good house, good rooms, good food, plenty of servants, and plenty of society—all for a fractional outlay; instead of wearing themselves out with the *ennui* of a house in the suburbs—don't you think so, Limpet?

And Humphrey Limpet of course did think so, though it must be owned that his experience of either resort was as yet rather limited.

And so, whilst Hawkwell talked and the others listened, time and distance were overcome, and the carriage swept into the shady grounds of Orleans House—a pretty terminus to a charming journey, where the cows were dreamily sauntering home from their milking as though they were thorough country cows down at Pym, instead of being mere cockney animals within a few miles of the metropolis; where a well-dressed crowd was grouped about cool rooms and trim gardens, and where a military band on the lawn was making a lovely evening lovelier with the swelling strains of the beautiful 'Sweethearts' valse.

Lucy was in ecstasies, her eyes sparkling

with pleasure, and her little foot tapping the ground involuntarily to the measures of the music.

‘I shall begin dancing if this goes on much longer,’ she said; and Hawkwell, as he looked at her animated face, thought he had never seen anything so lovely, and might, by an attentive listener, have even been heard to give vent to a sigh, which was a sentimental outburst so uncommon with him, that only feeling of a deeper sort than usual could possibly have called it forth.

And now let me ease my appalled reader of an alarm which may possibly have seized him; namely, that he is approaching the immediate brink of an account of the dinners of which these worthy people are about to partake. It may be reassuring to know that the eating of that meal has no part in my story, beyond the fact that it conduced to that comfortable state of satisfaction with all men and things to which a ‘well-ordered repast should certainly tend. But, the refec-tion at an end, the party strolled forth on to the terrace, and the two gentlemen lit, of course, their cigars. And, as will happen

when four people are sauntering about, the party became split up into pairs; and it chanced that in so dividing themselves Humphrey Limpet found that he was in partnership with Mrs. Proctor; for perhaps Augustus Hawkwell felt that he had hitherto sufficiently devoted himself to that lady.

On what topics the elder lady and the young warrior discoursed, it concerns us not to be inquisitive; though we may so far forestall Mr. Limpet's history, which does not further concern us, by saying that the doors of certain tolerably good houses became open to him after this eventful evening, and this was no doubt effected through the good-natured instrumentality of Mrs. Proctor.

Thus then it fell that Lucy Gaythorne and Augustus Hawkwell found themselves, without other companionship, some way behind the others; and, by means of an adroit mistake, a wrong path was successfully taken, and so their segregation became comfortably complete. And if Lucy herself was at all conscious of these clever manoeuvres,

it was beyond all question extremely reprehensible in her ; but so flourishes the spirit of mischief in healthy, happy youth, that I think it not impossible the teachings of Mrs. Grundy were momentarily defied or forgotten, and that these erring steps were taken consciously and advisedly.

Through the leafy alleys of the shrubberies they passed, these two, and over the little bridge that spans the road, and so down to the river-side ; where, at all events, it must have been sufficiently evident that they were at fault in the pursuit of Aunt Hester, unless they could have supposed that, like some Thetis of old, she had disappeared beneath the limpid wavelets of the stream.

There, by the shore, was moored a comely skiff ; and what more natural than that Hawkwell should step into it, and invite Miss Lucy to escape from the dewy turf and to come also into the little bark.

The spirit of mischief was paramount. The river was looking lovely as it flowed along between its darkening banks, a gleaming ribbon brilliant with the reflection of a thousand hues of dying day ; here and there

some other boats were gliding along peacefully and smoothly, and it would be delightful to explore the stream lower down. Besides all this, two stern grey eyes, that looked as though they would never take a 'nay,' were gazing entreaties to her; and a strong arm and hand were already extended towards her to aid her in the seemingly simple transit from shore to ship.

Just for a moment she hesitated, thinking perhaps of Mrs. Grundy; but if so, allowing that lady but sparse consideration. And then, with such a leap as ladies seem usually to affect when embarking in these fragile pleasure-craft, she bounded into the boat, and would not unlikely have capsized it forthwith, or at least have herself fallen overboard, had not two strong arms caught her; such at least must be the justification for the strong arms, though it must be owned that there was some little reason for Lucy's heightened colour in the fact that the embrace was prolonged for perhaps a second longer than was absolutely necessary. Well, well, not every day are strong arms called upon to ward off shipwreck in so pleasing a fashion!

‘We mustn’t go far, you know,’ says Lucy, taking her seat in the comfortable cushions of the stern, and assuming also the responsibilities of coxswain.

‘Of course they wouldn’t go far,’ assents her gondolier.

But the stream is swift, and the motion pleasant; and time and the boat too slip along at a pace quite unobserved.

‘It’s very lovely, is it not?’ says Hawkwell presently, resting on his sculls.

‘Very,’ replies Lucy.

The soothing repose of the scene was not inviting to effort at conversation of a more lengthy or more profound description; and for some minutes the little boat glided along in complete silence.

‘I wonder if you know the song “Lord Ullen’s Daughter”?’ asks Hawkwell.

‘I’ve heard it,’ says Lucy. ‘A young couple go to sea in a leaky boat, don’t they?’

‘And go to the bottom also—yes! It wasn’t a very wise proceeding, I expect; but I suppose they were, so to say, driven into a corner. What would you? Here was an

irascible old father in hot pursuit, and gaining on them every second, and here was a lake and a boat! The young fellow wasn't great at aquatics, I dare say, but I think I should have done as he did, and taken to the water under the circumstances. It reminds me rather of a parallel case, where a certain couple found themselves in the grounds at Orleans House, harried by the exigencies of a society not so congenial to them as their own to the bank of the Thames; and here was a boat and——'

'But we are not going to the bottom, I hope!' interposed Lucy.

'I hope not! I see no prospect of a storm, at all events at present.'

'And I can't fancy Aunt Hester raving at us from the shore, like his lordship in the song. I don't think you will make much of that simile, Mr. Hawkwell!'

'Perhaps not. Only, you know, here is the boat, and—and here is the couple!'

'How well that man rows! But what a mere cockle-shell of a boat he is in!' says Lucy, changing the subject, as she looked towards a white figure in an outrigger, coming

down stream some few hundred yards away from them.

‘He sculls well, doesn’t he? Yes! “Lord Ullen,” perhaps!’

But the young athlete in the outrigger is apparently a person who works by fits and starts only; now bending vigorously to the oar and sending the little craft flying like a kingfisher over the surface of the stream, now skimming smoothly along on feathered sculls for several minutes together, so that the distance between the two boats is but little decreased by his intermittent exertions.

‘What an age of frivolity we live in!’ mused Hawkwell aloud, after another pause, as he gazed pensively down at the waving water-weeds over which they were floating. ‘Why is it, I wonder, that nowadays a man scarcely dare speak seriously for fear of being thought a solemn or a sentimental prig? A beautiful poem, or a stirring song, has hardly a chance of being heard in these times. It has scarcely seen the light ere it is burlesqued; and a man knows he has more chance of a hearing in speaking to the world in a tone of

facetious ribaldry, than in any higher or nobler language.'

'Ah, that is so true!' said Lucy. 'And that is why you chose to take liberties, just now, with a very charming old song, I suppose!'

'Precisely. I paid you the doubtful compliment of supposing that the shallowest of wit would be more acceptable to you than any other strain. I hope you won't judge me accordingly. Nobody has a greater contempt for that style of buffoonery than I have myself. If I were alone, an evening and a scene such as this would fill me with thoughts very far removed from farcical, and I don't know why I need fear to be my true self because you are here—you, whose good opinion I value above that of most others.'

'I am glad you don't think me entirely frivolous,' said Lucy, with some little eagerness; and, indeed, it was a real sense of relief to find that some one person, at all events, there was with sufficient penetration to gauge the reality of her disposition, and to give her credit for an appreciation of something nobler and more substantial than the inane delights of mere vanity and fashion.

Who that has taken the trouble to consider thoughtfully the daily career of some fair young London belle, to whom fashion has accorded the reputation of being beautiful beyond her fellows, but must sometimes feel a pity for the weariness of the part she has to play ; for the high tension of frivolity which becomes ere long a condition essential to her career, if not to her being ; for the nothingness of her lot, except as the mere plaything of society ? Should she be cast in so superior a mould that the incense of admiration be not altogether intoxicating to her, where shall she find a place wherein to play a more earnest part ? ‘What ! Your part is butterfly ! Why this aping of the labour of the bee ?’ cry her playmates. So can she trust only to the fleeting reputation of a painted wing, and flit an idle course in a sunshine which she knows is only too fickle and temporary.

Into such metaphorical language, it is true, Lucy had not as yet framed her sentiments ; but she was regretfully aware, nevertheless, of the utter nothingness of her social career, and that a man so gifted as Augustus Hawk-

well should see in her greater depth than she was usually credited with, was especially grateful to her.

‘It is not everyone, Miss Gaythorne, before whom I would venture to be what people would call sentimental. I hope you will take it as a compliment if I give you credit for more heart and sympathy than others,’ said Hawkwell. ‘Perhaps the world would have been very different to many others besides myself, who have known the bitterness of its ways, had only some ear been open to listen to the tale of our temptations and trials, and some generous heart capable of extending its sympathy! Ah, you who are young, and, as I earnestly pray, sheltered from the storm, can hardly know how we who are without, battered about by wrong and sin and trouble of all kinds, yearn sometimes—oh, how eagerly!—for the kindly voice of your encouragement and sympathy. They prate of the experience of us, who have fought in the battle of life and have known its wounds, being a defence, a guide and warning to those who have not yet buckled on their armour! And when do we hear of

the subtle power, the sweet enchantment of the voice of untried innocence to arouse in us, who have fought and fallen, a craving to rise again to higher things ?

He spoke with a passionate bitterness of voice that was none the less moving in having burst so suddenly forth after his recent tone of light banter, and Lucy listened with the greater interest and attention, that she had not hitherto supposed such a well of deep feeling to exist in him. But though it was true that Augustus Hawkwell, who had seen some nine-and-thirty summers, and had led hitherto a life not more blameless than that of other men of his standing, had known the smart of material consequences, and had even experienced, from time to time, the sharp Nemesis of remorse ; and though it must be freely allowed that he had spoken on this occasion with an earnestness that came from his heart, yet must it also be owned that he was not entirely unconscious of the perhaps untoward fact that this mysterious self-accusing was not unlikely to induce an interest in him in a warm-hearted disposition such as Lucy Gaythorne's, which would

probably far exceed that accorded to a well-conducted person of only matter-of-fact antecedents.

‘You won’t mind my speaking in this way before you, I trust?’ he said, following up the poetic advantage of his position. ‘You will forgive me if I have been led, by my estimate of your good heart, to give way to feelings which I have longed, oh, how often! to find a listener for! If I dared, Miss Gaythorne, I would tell you more of myself than I have ever breathed to any human being before. Ten years ago—only ten years, and yet how long ago it seems!—I was a boy then, and hardly knew how quickly the sharpness of a severe trial might make me a man! May I go on?’

And Lucy murmured that she was longing to hear, as, indeed, who that knoweth woman can suppose she was otherwise?

‘Ten years ago, then, when I was a gay young fellow, with hardly a care in the world beyond the fit of my coat and the health of my horse, I was travelling on the Continent, and in the course of my rambles I met—where, matters not—with a fate that com-

monly overtakes youth sooner or later ; that is to say, I fell in love—madly, desperately, in love. Never before had I beheld—I thought *then* never again should I see—a face and form so lovely as Helen Lapont's ; and though her station in life was not an exalted one—her father, indeed, was some drinking old *roué*, who got his living in some sort by occasional employment at the opera—I vowed that nothing should deter me from marrying her, if only I myself should be acceptable to her. At this time I had hardly more than seen her, and when, after endless trouble and management, I had succeeded in becoming acquainted with her, it was only to find that her qualities of mind and disposition only strengthened my resolve a thousandfold. I will not presume to tire you with any account of my courtship. I told my love, and, in the wildest ecstasy, I left old Dupont's lodgings assured that Helen was as much attached to myself as I was to her. As I look back on my life, I tell myself often and often that that night was one of the purest, highest happiness I have ever known. I lay awake, wondering whether such undeserved

bliss were not after all only a dream ; and at the earliest opportunity in the morning I rushed in feverish anticipation to the Duponts', to revel in the attainment of what I had for weeks and weeks so longed for. Mysterious check to this carnival of delight ! When I knocked at their door there was no response, and, on inquiry, I found that father and daughter had taken their departure, none knew whither, on the previous night. My utter despair was frightfully intensified by my previous feverish exultation. I left no stone unturned that might lead to the discovery of their whereabouts. I communicated by telegraph with the police of every capital that boasted an opera-house, and I even employed secret agents to travel here and there in the hopes of finding some clue that might put me on their track, but all seemed of no avail ; perhaps the police had matters of more moment to attend to, perhaps my messengers were more concerned with the delight of travel than with the task I had set them.

'At last, after some months, I grew hopeless, and, utterly dejected, found myself in Paris on my return journey homewards. I was

quite listless of what was going on in the world—utterly careless, indeed, as to what became of me—when one June evening, as I was strolling along, I knew not whither, my heedless steps took me across the Seine, beyond Notre Dame, to a quarter of the town not much frequented as a rule by the pleasure-seekers of Paris, and, as I was passing up a little street, my ears suddenly caught a sound that they had been taught to regard as the sweetest in the world, that I had been hearing in imagination, through many days and nights of weary, weary search—the sound, namely, of Helen's voice.

‘Every nerve and pulse in my body was quickened. I started as though touched by an electric shock, and I looked up to behold one who I knew could be no other than Helen Lapont. It was Helen Lapont, indeed ; but in such a dress of poverty as I had not seen her in before, with such a look of misery on her face as would have been a sufficient disguise in itself to any but my own hungry eyes. What did I care for rags or want ! I seized her eagerly by the hand, and I believe I retained my grasp for nearly an hour,

dreading lest I should again lose what my soul so coveted, as we strolled together through the streets and lanes of the city, and as I plied her anxiously and wildly with question after question. Of one thing I was determined, no force of circumstances should ever induce me to lose sight of her again, or to exchange the rapture of possession for the agony of separation which I had recently endured.

‘Her story was a long one, but I can condense it for you in a few words. Her father, and only her love for myself would induce her to tell it, had been in hiding from the police, and only on the night of our new-found joy had he received information that obliged him to fly in order to escape arrest. The crime of which he was accused was, so she said, a slight one, and of it he was innocent. As to that I own I had my doubts, for old Lapont was not a person I should myself have trusted far. That is no matter. My poor Helen had shared his flight and his concealment, and, in consequence, was almost destitute. Then I saw my opportunity. I implored her to find with me the shelter, support, and comfort which her father could not

even provide for himself, and after long entreaties, for she was loth to leave her father, of whom she was passionately fond despite his character, she consented that we should be married at once.'

He paused, lost for a moment in reverie.

'And you were married !' asked Lucy presently.

'And we were married as soon as possible, and for a few months I revelled in a happiness which I had not conceived possible in an imperfect world. The old father died shortly after our marriage, and I am not sure I may not own that his removal was rather a relief to me than otherwise ; Helen was now all my own, and it mattered not what connection she might have had with any rather disreputable relations—the last link in the chain was broken—and hitherto she need be thought and spoken of only as my wife.

'Well, matters seemed to be with us only too pleasant to be lasting. As will happen, however, with even the most loving couples, there were now and then of course slight differences of opinion — differences which seemed only to exist in order to save the

current of our joy from monotony, and to make us know the ecstasy of reconciliation. One day, however—a day I have cursed ever since as the blackest that has ever darkened my lot, a little quarrel assumed graver proportions. It matters not now what the cause was; perhaps I was imperious—perhaps Helen was over-hasty. Either way I have known ever since an agony of remorse for every word I uttered on that miserable occasion, and I can speak of it even to you only with extreme pain. Words ran high, and even recrimination and taunt passed between us; till Helen threatened that by one word of hers she could embitter my whole life, and that if provoked too far she would not scruple to say what was in her mind; and I, thinking perhaps it was but the vain threat of an angry woman, and perhaps because in my blind passion I hardly considered what I was saying—I, I say, defied her, and oh, utter agony! her hot Italian blood ran high, and she said it: that one word that sent me down from the pinnacle of false happiness I had been enjoying, a poor shrivelled helpless atom of misery, to the lowest abyss of woe and despair—she told me——’

Hawkwell stopped for a moment; the recollection of his sharp trial apparently choking even now his free utterance.

‘She told me,’ Hawkwell proceeded in a low voice—‘that she was already another’s wife! And I think the cry she gave forth immediately after the fatal words had passed her lips will haunt me to my very grave. To say that I was stunned, stupefied, would convey no sense whatever of the frightful effect of this crushing blow upon me. At first, of course, I could scarce bring myself to realise it. Then I implored her passionately and childishly to tell me she had only lied in order to defend herself from my taunts and chidings. And then when my mind fully grasped our hideous impotence to bridge over the gulf between us, I madly besought her to let it be as though I were still her rightful husband, to believe that no consciousness of her ill-fame could alter by a needle’s width the wholeness of my passionate love for her. But it was all in vain; the die was cast—the sentence past. Helen was obdurate to my entreaties, knowing perhaps too well the

certain consequence of her fatal speech to her own belief in my esteem for her.

‘Hour by hour, for a day and a night I argued, prayed, reasoned with, entreated her ; and then at last I became sorrowfully conscious that my house of cards was shattered—my fool’s paradise at an end. We parted, she going I hardly knew whither ; I to seek in the roughest life I could find in the Colonies some oblivion, if possible, of my sorrow—some opiate, as it were, for my pain. There I worked, spurred by this demon of remorse and misery, as certainly no other man about me worked, and the result of my labours was a wealth I hardly valued, as bringing me not one jot nearer to the only state I coveted. Day and night—day and night I was vexed and haunted by the grim remembrance of my bitter words, and the awful climax of our miserable altercation ; and thus you may believe that when one evening I chanced to see in a newspaper a notice of Helen’s death, the pain of the announcement hardly aggravated, rather perhaps soothed, my former misery.

‘Yes, Miss Gaythorne, it is all over now,

and I only hope I have not wearied you with this long sad story of myself. Only the moving effect of this still time and scene, and the sympathy I was sure of, could have induced me to speak as I have done. You alone know now how if I have sometimes appeared gloomy and depressed, it has not been without cause.'

'Oh! it is the saddest tale I have ever heard,' said Lucy, with some feeling; and as she lifted her eyes to his, Hawkwell thought, though the light to be sure was not good, that they were filled with tears.

'It is quite the saddest tale I have ever heard,' said Lucy; 'and yet I, for one, should never have guessed you had gone through such a sorrow. I have always thought you the gayest of the gay.'

'A man does not parade feelings of that sort to the world, you know, Miss Gaythorne. He likes to bear a good front, whatever is going on within his heart. And besides, you may remember that sweet stanza of Wordsworth's—

"But we are press'd by heavy laws;
And often, glad no more,
We wear a *face* of joy because
We have been glad of yore."

‘Only such a temptation as this of a good-hearted listener could have induced me to yield to the weakness of unfolding my secret in this way—only that, and because’—here he bent forward, leaning over his sculls with his face as near as possible to hers—‘and because I have learned in the last month that I may yet hope for some balm after all to that early wound—because I have found that if I loved passionately ten years ago, I have buried my love in one deeper, more maddening still——’

But even as he speaks in this impassioned way, with all the force of his appealing voice, thinking perhaps that only the stars that were beginning to twinkle in the deepening twilight were witnesses of his words, and that in this little boat there could be no escape for this lovely girl from the torrent of passion which his wrought state impelled him to pour forth, it chanced that the wayward fancy of the man in white flannels moved him once more to emulate the flight of the kingfisher. There is a sharp clicking sound in the rowlocks, a swish of the feathered sculls on the rippling surface, and

after a few bold, powerful strokes the dainty outrigger is dancing alongside the skiff in which Hawkwell and Miss Gaythorne are talking all this sentiment ; and Lucy, looking up to gaze at this exhibition of masterly style, suddenly cries out 'Cherry!' in a ringing, joyous voice, and the white-flannelled crew of the outrigger gives thereon such an involuntary yet violent start as very nearly made immediate shipwreck of that frail vessel, and the kingfisher-like flight is arrested with such a sudden backwater-stroke as almost snapped the sculls.

'Lucy! Where in the world! How on earth——! I mean who would ever have thought——!' exclaimed Charters, it must be owned somewhat incoherently.

And Lucy explained some of the leading features of the position, and introduced Cheriton to her companion, who certainly wished him and his outrigger were at the bottom of the Thames, though politeness obliged him to express a contrary sentiment, and who, when Lucy urged that they must certainly turn about the ship and go back to Aunt Hester, did not second with any great

warmth Cheriton's expressed intention of sculling back alongside them.

Yet this was the course which Charters took upon himself to adopt, and moreover engaged in such a continuous conversation with Miss Gaythorne, as made it impossible for Hawkwell to renew the previous tenour of his remarks, even had such a thing been possible with a strange ship immediately alongside, or in their wake.

There was yet, however, something to be hoped for in the short stroll he and Lucy would have together from the river back to the house, and it was therefore with feelings of immense disgust that, when they arrived at the haven of Orleans, he perceived that Aunt Hester and his friend Limpet were already awaiting them, having perhaps exhausted their appreciation of each other's converse, and were urgent for a return home to town. And so that interesting conversation was nipped untimely in the bud, and came to an end for that day at all events. The drive back to London was accomplished in much silence, two members of the party at least having much to occupy their thoughts,

Aunt Hester resigning herself to a comfortable nap, and Limpet rejoicing in the prospect of a fashionable career through Mrs. Proctor's agency, and becomingly grateful also for a pleasant expedition, let us hope ; for when he was dropped at the doors of the Spurs and Anchor Club, and had joined the congenial company in the smoking-room, some other young warrior asked him where he had spent the evening ; and he, not perhaps without pride, told how he had been dining with a fellow called Hawkwell, ' and with Miss Gaythorne at the Orleans.'

'Hawkwell!' says the other, ignoring the more celebrated name of the lady ; 'Hawkwell! I know the fellow. Rather a snob, isn't he, Humph ?'

Whereupon honest Humphrey said, gasping out the reflection after a long pull at a brandy-and-soda water, that 'he didn't know whether he was a snob or not—he hadn't perceived it ; and all he knew was that he had given him a right good dinner.'

CHAPTER VII.

DOUBT.

OUR friend Charters, for several mornings after he had made that strange and sudden appearance on the river's bosom, found himself to be in a very unsettled state of mind—so unsettled, indeed, that it induced a discontent with everything about him, and entirely unfitted him for steady work. He is restless, if not unhappy, and the whistle and the song are not heard as they usually may be whilst he plies his pleasant calling. His discontent with things in general includes the results of his own labours; his pictures appear to him to have little or nothing to recommend them either in execution or design, and if, as he asks himself, he can himself see nothing to admire in them, how is the public to be ex-

pected to do so ? The world is certainly out of joint as he regards it in these inauspicious days, and his outlook into the future of the gloomiest sort. And perhaps it is not necessary to inform the astute reader that all this *tedium vitæ*, this railing at himself, his labours, his fortunes, and the world in which they are cast, arises not from any sudden falling of the scales from long-deceived eyes, but rather from a murky curtain which his adventure on that Saturday evening has caused to be drawn over his imagination. In point of fact poor Cheriton is as deeply in love as ever, and is suffering from an attack of the malady all the more acute perhaps from its being long suppressed. He had fancied himself rather a philosopher, had this young painter, and that inasmuch as the grapes were out of his reach, he would school himself, not indeed to believe them sour, but at all events to cease to regard them with longing. He had taken this task of self-mastery bravely in hand, and by cultivating a delight in his work, and by a careful use of all spare time wherein might be found room for softening dreams, had proposed to gradually eradicate all trace

of his former passion. Such was the task he had set himself, and such a task he had thought himself in a fair way to perform. And now he has had a rude awakening, and is disappointed with himself, and humbly owns that he has failed—that he is after all no philosopher, able to reason with his yearnings and to control them, but only a poor ordinary creature, possessed of a passion for a moon which he knows to be entirely out of his reach. He had gone down to Kingston late on the afternoon of Saturday, a tolerably constant custom with him, in order to stretch his muscles and clear his lungs by an exercise in which his early Eton training had made him a proficient.

After the long cramped sitting at the easel, it was gloriously renovating to give full play to his muscular limbs, and to draw large breaths of the river breezes as the light boat skimmed merrily over the surface of the stream. As a rule he would row steadily for miles, and then, pleasantly fatigued and ravenously hungry, would dine at some riverside inn, and return to Kingston and to town a new man. On this fatal Saturday evening,

however, he had turned his boat's nose down stream instead of up, and the setting sun and the full-leaved trees reflected in the water had combined to make such lovely pictures as stirred the innate poetry of his character, and induced him to indulge in frequent intervals of repose, in order to enjoy the fair prospect. Ah! those moments of repose at such a bewitching time, and in the midst of such lovely scenery, they were very dangerous to his Spartan intentions.

Drifting along noiselessly with still sculls, he gives himself up, just for this once at all events, to a dream of the past; and, the indulgence allowed, a thousand fancies and recollections arise and re-awake the only slumbering chords of his passion. He is gazing intently far down the river-reach at the lights beginning to twinkle in the windows of the villas, and re-twinkling in the eddying water—at the sombre masses of the foliage losing all shape in the deepening darkness—at the glistening course of the noble stream as it lies broad and peaceful in his wake. But his eye is not taking conscious note of any object, he is seeing again in his mind

a slight young form and a long-fringed eye—he is hearing the ring of a joyous laughter and the note of a well-loved voice—he is recalling many a scene of earlier days—and he is longing, with ever so hungry a longing, for at least one more intoxicating experience of Lucy's fascination, be the consequence what it may.

And then from this weakness of awakening the old echoes of his passionate memory, he passes by degrees to that other enfeebling indulgence of castle-building, and allows himself to picture his love returned, and the possession of his idol possible. Never since those early boyish days, when words could be regarded conveniently as of no serious import, had he ventured to speak of his love, to allow his tongue to be traitor to his mind, and to tell how the heart of the ardent boy was not altered one tittle in more collected manhood. And yet how had he fretted beneath the self-imposed yoke—and how had he longed again and again to cast off all restraint, to waive all dictates of expediency—to lay bare the secret yearnings of his honest love—and to solace himself ever after with the know-

ledge that Lucy was conscious of it, even though he could hope for no greater satisfaction. On such a theme as this had he mused, lost in dreams that were part painful, part delicious, for some time ; and then, recalling his better intentions, he had, so to say, pulled himself together, and determined to shake off the sweet weakness if possible in physical exertion. He had better, so he told himself, be at pains to see as little as possible, and to think as little as possible, of Lucy Gaythorne, even though he knew he was still thinking of her and still longing to see her.

Then he had taken those few vigorous strokes which have been described in the last chapter, bringing him alongside a strange craft ; and as he was passing it, wholly ignorant of its freight, a voice ringing out his own name in the evening stillness had made his heart bound with a sudden shock of exultation, and had brought the rapid course of his vessel to a stop, as quickly and almost as involuntarily as though a shot had been fired through her bows.

Part of what followed we know—the other part, so crushingly disastrous to his philoso-

phic resolutions, it remains to tell ; how he hung about the river for several hours, exulting under the pale moonbeams in the sweet afterglow of his delicious rencontre ; and then how far into the night he had sat in his own studio, giving himself up to an intoxicating contemplation of everything which he had stoically denied himself to think of for many months past. Thus, then, it came about that that even frame of mind, which had hitherto been so valuable a quality in furthering his daily labours, ceased to avail him ; and what little evenness he was still master of was considerably marred by the recollection of a circumstance which in the first flush of his excitement had not struck him, namely, the presence of this Mr. Hawkwell under such unusual conditions with Lucy.

‘What right had the fellow there?’ he wondered, ‘sculling Miss Gaythorne about the river late in the evening? Was Tom aware of such doings? If he was, why then—why then, could it be that this fellow Hawkwell—this city-made gallant—this creature of yesterday, was betrothed to such a girl as Lucy? Whilst he had been hiding himself

away from her, because he held himself unworthy to ask her for her hand, had this mere parvenu—this man of unknown antecedents, who had achieved nothing beyond the mere clever handling of moneys, had he come to her with a tale of love, and dazzled her with the false glitter of his purse-born bravery, and fascinated her with the wiles of a clever tongue? What a poor fool he had been after all, lying thus idly by apart from the lists, striving only to depreciate the prize to his own mind, and forgetting that if he would not seek it, some other knight, more adventurous, if less scrupulous than himself, would certainly come forward to seek her favour, and to shame his own seeming timidity by winning her!’

It must be owned that the resolute virtue of the young fellow, which had been maintained bravely under all the urgent promptings of his own heart, was not found to be proof against those throes of jealousy which the sudden appearance of the green-eyed monster had given rise to. It was one thing to stifle his sighs whilst no other note of love was being sounded in Lucy’s ear, it was quite

a different task to remain quiescent whilst another person was making his sighs so distinctly audible as to attract the attention of their object. He knew that he was failing to play the high *rôle* which he had destined for himself—knew that it was only a proof of pitiable weakness that he should derive some consolation from thus vilifying his rival, calling him ‘parvenu,’ ‘adventurer,’ and what not; whereas he knew that in his heart he greatly admired the enterprise and courage of Augustus Hawkwell, and was aware that his prosperity was worn with becoming modesty and grace.

He perhaps knows, also, that it is a further pitiable weakness that he should resolve after all to neglect his work, when Monday morning had come and found him in the same unsettled mood, and to betake himself instead to some giddy haunt, where he may have opportunity to make himself yet more miserable by at least a sight of Miss Gaythorne.

Alas! alas! such a splendid light as this glorious morning throws into the studio! And yet here is our young painter, regardless of canvas and palette, arranging a necktie

with more than ordinary care, and yielding to petty anxieties as to the fit of his coat and as to whether his hair doesn't want cutting !

It is twelve o'clock already, and the great work on the easel should have been advanced by some four or five hours' work ; yet the workman has dallied instead over a late breakfast and a lounging smoke, and is now bowling along in a hansom cab to the gay West.

Let me turn for awhile to a certain drawing-room in Pink Street, Park Lane, and see how fares Miss Lucy, who is the prime cause of all this idleness and perturbation of mind.

Let us own at once that our heroine, subject to human failings and weaknesses like other people, is rather cross this morning. Frizette, her maid, has had a roughish time of it over her young lady's toilette, being subjected to a remonstrance as to the tedious length of time occupied in arranging her hair, and getting a positive wiggling for the way in which certain mysterious frillings or trimmings of some sort or another have been 'got up.'

Downstairs, in the dining-room, Miss Gaythorne has, moreover, proved herself in the

mood of a martinet, and has read the Riot Act to the footman because the *Morning Post* has not been properly aired, and has sent down her breakfast untouched, with a request that the cook will send up something fit to eat. Poor Mrs. Proctor, attempting without tact and discretion to palliate these domestic shortcomings, has been sarcastically told that 'of course there is nothing like allowing servants to do just as they please ; that, in point of fact, they are paid wages solely that they may loll about and amuse themselves, to the neglect of their masters and mistresses.'

'I suppose, Aunt Hester, we are not to be sat upon' (that was the elegant term used) ; 'I suppose we are not to be sat upon by the servants, simply because Tom is away ? I suppose I may find fault without the world actually coming to an end ?' she had said ; and Mrs. Proctor had replied that she couldn't imagine what Lucy could mean by such a term as 'sat upon,' which was perhaps not strictly true. And there had been a little argument, a few words in fact, ending in Aunt Hester, who was the weaker spirit of

the two, who was no martinet, and who took the world very easily, deprecating censure as promoting discord—ending, I say, in Aunt Hester retiring to lie down with one of those headaches which are the refuge of many sensitive ladies when worsted in a struggle.

How sweet had been that lovely Saturday evening at Orleans House, and that lounge in the deepening twilight upon the river, that was so unusual an experience, so almost romantic a proceeding, as to seem little more than a dream when regarded from the standpoint of matter-of-fact, everyday avocations ! How sweet too had been the subtle flattery of this man's admiration, and how tame life seemed amongst these less roseate, less poetic accessories of Pink Street, of petty vexations about ill-trimmed clothes and indifferently cooked food, and of dear matter-of-fact Aunt Hester ! The interesting events of that delicious evening had certainly made an impression upon Miss Lucy. Again and again, on the succeeding day, she had caught herself dwelling upon them in a half-regretful, half-charming reverie ; and now that Monday was come, she was still conscious of regarding

that Saturday evening as an especially green spot in her gay young existence.

How then ! was she already in love with this Augustus, that she is thus languishing over the recollection of his attentions, and thus fractious with the world about her, because he has no immediate part in it ? Ah ! love is an exceedingly subtle complaint, manifesting itself sometimes in symptoms of the most various sort, and frequently defying even the patient to pronounce confidently on its existence, let alone so clumsy an analyst as the present historian, whose province is merely to detail certain occurrences for the perusal of his readers, leaving it to their higher acumen to gauge the state of feeling of which they may be the tell-tale.

‘Poor Cherry !’ she says to herself, as she is still thinking over that aquatic expedition on this Monday morning, occupied the while in some mechanical labour of sewing such as has the like soothing effect on woman that tobacco-smoking has on man. ‘Poor Cherry !’ Then she sighed heavily ; and from this circumstance the reader may again form his own deduction.

Poor Cherry, how handsome he had looked flashing past in his outrigger ! How true and good and noble he was ! And yet how was there something lacking in his circumstances and bearing that made his career fall short of the heroic ? That cheerful acceptance of his altered lot—that manly self-denial—that generous sympathy—these, and other virtues, made Cheriton Charters a worthy object for admiration and respect ; but alas ! so weak is human nature, there was something positively tiresome in these very virtues, which were of a rather tame and uninteresting sort.

Cherry's virtues were, in fact, of just such an order as to preclude the possibility of attractive vices. There was no half-mysterious past with which he was associated, and his troubles had been sober troubles, brought about by no reckless, yet picturesque, sowing of wild oats. Life with Cherry, and such a life she was dimly conscious to be within the range of possibilities for herself, would realise no ideal for her—would fulfil no aspiration : it would be a life rather of humdrum economy than of absolute poverty ; and a

life of humdrum economy, of making ends meet, of keeping down butcher's and baker's books, of struggling to maintain appearances, and to cultivate respectability, a sleek prosaic virtue for which she had no sympathy, would so ill accord with the roseate lines in which her present lot was cast, and on which her tastes were gradually being formed, as to be positively obnoxious to her. In the abstract, the poetry even of absolute poverty was more attractive to her than the colourless prose of a mere bare competency, especially if the absolute poverty had been brought about by the previous glitter of a dashing prodigality, and was borne in a light-hearted, happy-go-lucky manner.

Into such a train as this were her thoughts turned by the events which had taken place on the river at Orleans House. She was conscious that a crisis had arrived in her life, that it behoved her now, instead of drifting pleasantly and idly with the current as heretofore, to take the tiller of her own destiny in hand. Augustus Hawkwell had spoken words about the meaning of which there could be no room for doubt, and though any

immediate notice of them had been made unnecessary by the welcome arrival of Cheriton in his boat, still she was aware that her decision was not thus avoided but only postponed, and that it behoved her to know her own mind on the subject.

Hence had come doubt; hence sighs; hence half-apologies to herself for the possible eviction of 'poor Cherry' for ever from her heart; hence a strong bias nevertheless in his favour; and hence sleepless nights ending in the bathos of fractious morns.

Let us not blame her too readily, nor cry out on her that she, who is posed as our heroine, is after all but a poor, frivolous wordling, incapable even of sufficiently strong feeling to give love a chance of existence, let alone any self-sacrifice on its behalf. A good orthodox heroine should, I will readily allow, be from the first volume so thoroughly enamoured of the right man as to make any doubt as to where her affections are placed quite impossible, whatever troubles fate may prepare for her on their behalf throughout the other two volumes. But life, nevertheless, is full of contradictions of our most

usual experience, and of our most cherished ideals.

‘Let us speak of a man as we find him.’

I write of poor Lucy as she was ; and if she had shortcomings like some others of us, it is my province nevertheless faithfully to record them. Yet if an apology for her be necessary, let me remind the reader that fortune had cast her lot in a butterfly world, and in an atmosphere of wealth and luxury ; that she was no longer the simple country girl easily satisfied with the quiet plain life at Pym, or jubilantly expectant of some county ball. Every day of her present life the cup of flattery and admiration, in one form or another, is being offered her ; is it surprising that she is made, at least temporarily, somewhat giddy by such draughts as these—somewhat fascinated by the glitter of the feast, and bewildered by the prospect of its continuance ?

She had intended to have ridden in the park this morning, and, in fact, is even now attired in her riding-habit, her dainty little hat and gloves, and the whip that was

Cheriton's gift, beside her. But the day is broiling hot, and she is conscious that to ride this morning will be to complicate, or rather to precipitate, her position ; for she knows that Augustus Hawkwell is expecting to meet her on horseback in the Row. So she sends away her horse from the door, and, laying aside that narcotic needlework, busies herself in arranging the flowers that have just arrived from Pym.

Dear old Pym ! How lovely the flowers are, and how vividly they recall to her the gardens from whence they came, and the sweet simple life that even already these few weeks of vanity and dissipation have robbed of its innocent charm ! For a moment she half wishes herself back on the terrace, snipping the roses from their own stem, instead of reviving the poor outcasts with water in this smoky land of their exile—snipping the roses, and singing in sheer careless exultation, or spinning through the green lanes in the dog-cart with Tom, to some such wanton jollification of archery or lawn-tennis meeting as the county offers.

But the regret is, we must own, only a

momentary one; there is to be performed *Der Freischutz* to-night at Covent Garden, and she is to occupy a box in the centre of the grand tier—and there is afterwards to be a ball at Gulliver House, on her presence at which many well-favoured young gentlemen of fashion and of great valseing capabilities, are, as she knows, counting. And on this very afternoon are there not several delicious interviews to be gone through with milliners and other panderers to female vanity and taste? And is she not besides due to exhibit her skill at Prince's Club in administering another beating to poor sighing young Damask, so soon as the day shall be sufficiently cool to allow of that pastime? O opera, and ball, and milliners! O *tempora!* O *mores!* What chance has poor Pym with its sober bumpkin joys against such giddinesses as these?

Meantime, whilst Miss Lucy is being thus harassed with doubts, and giving way to procrastination and to half-formed yearnings for retired peace, Black Monday, motionless as a statue but for the whiskings of a short inefficient tail, is standing with outstretched

legs at the extreme eastern end of Rotten Row, and is beginning to tire alike of flies and prolonged inactivity, whilst his rider is freely anathematising the heat, the crowd, and the uncertainty of woman's ways. And Cheriton Charters, having resigned the rudder of purpose by which he is accustomed to steer his daily course, is wandering here and there about Bond Street and Mayfair, vacillating between the dictates of a passionate desire to see his love, and a consciousness that, like the moth of hackneyed simile, the light is luring him only to greater suffering.

Presently he enters the Park at Stanhope Gate, and strolls across under the trees, and by the Achilles to where the gay world is congregated, dallying an idle hour of its idle day. When he is there, there is much to take him out of himself, and to make him forget both his neglected work and his love-troubles; for many know him—men from his own county, men who spend occasional pleasant hours in his big hospitable studio, and others—and hail his unwonted coming to these giddier scenes with a genial welcome.

‘Here’s Cherry, as I live!’ says Jack

Bounce, on whose income the rent of park-chairs is making frightful inroads, so constant an *habitué* is he. 'Here's Cherry, as I live, got up to the nines in his go-to-meeting clothes! Who's your tailor, Cherry? And why don't you make the knave fit you? And what are you doing, loafing about amongst us idlers instead of pounding away at your sign-boards? And why do you come out with a great dab of flake green, or whatever you call the pigment, on the back of your coat?'

'Any more questions whilst you are about it?' asks Charters, laughing; for Captain Jack was prince of fribbles, and would have his joke, as all the world knew.

'Why, yes, to be sure; you are just the man to tell us,' rattles on the guardsman. 'You are just the man to refer to. You know Miss Gaythorne? Of course you do; she comes from your own benighted wilds, doesn't she?'

'Well, go on, Jack; I know something of her certainly,' says Cherry, whose interest is aroused.

'Well, I've been telling these fellows she's

going to be spliced before the season's over, and they won't believe it. Quite true though, all the same; isn't it, Cherry? I ought to know, for I've nourished a secret passion for her myself ever since I first set eyes on her. Never told my love, you know, but "let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, peg into my damask cheek," as some rhyming fellow says. And, meantime, here's some city swell, a fellow called Hawkwell, with less modesty than mine, and with nothing like my good looks, has been making the running, and cut me out. Who told me? Oh, I forget; some woman or another, I expect. The news has so overwhelmed me, that my mind's quite a blank as to its source. The thing was settled down at the Orleans the other night, I'm told. I'm thinking of getting an exchange into some line regiment, and taking my sorrow out to the West Indies, or some other lively spot. Poor Damask here is in the same boat with me, only he feels it more, and hasn't my pluck and patience in adversity, poor chap; he talks of falling on his sword directly after parade to-morrow. I say, Damask, recollect you've

got to play Miss Gaythorne at Prince's this afternoon. It's a match, and I've put a hat of money on her ; none of your little suicidal consolations before that event, mind, or I'll give such evidence at the inquest as'll draw a verdict of *felo de se*, as sure as you are spoony.'

There are some complaints, such as measles or the mumps for instance, which, however inconvenient, distressing, even painful, appear quite to fail in arousing any active sympathy. If a man be afflicted with a quinsy, or suffer from a fall from his horse, his friends mention his indisposition, or his hurt, feelingly ; they call and inquire after him, and talk tenderly of him as ' poor So-and-so.' Such maladies as the above, however, are confessed to with a certain tittering shame, the sufferer perhaps himself feeling the humour of the position. So is it also with love, a distressing, disturbing fever enough surely, but which a man knows he will do well to bear in secret, lest his sufferings be aggravated by the ill-suppressed gibes of his associates.

Poor Cherry had received a blow, and one

in which he was not able to detect any scintilla of humour; yet he did not press his hand to his heart, or lay his palm to his forehead, to suppress the throbbings which this sudden information had caused. He occupied himself, instead, involuntarily in the less dramatic action of poking a pebble into the ground with the point of his umbrella, and presently took occasion to stroll away from his companions, whose waggeries he was just now in no mood to appreciate.

‘I’ve been crying for the moon like an ass all this time!’ he said to himself bitterly, as he threaded the well-dressed crowd, unconscious almost of its presence. ‘I’ve been crying for the moon. But Hawkwell—of all people Hawkwell!’

Perhaps that was one of the sharpest parts of the poor fellow’s trial. He had been keeping himself bravely apart from Lucy Gaythorne, flattering himself that he was mastering his passion, and that since she was utterly out of his reach, he would so overcome his foolish love as to be able to meet her in time with comparative indifference, with only a friendly yearning and the interest

of bygone association at all events. She might marry perhaps, and her possible marriage to some worthy individual, who as yet had no place in his mind—her marriage, so to say, in the abstract—was no especial impediment to the course of his proposed philosophy. Now, however, her possible marriage had been brought home to him by the actual nomination of the bridegroom, and the keenness of his disgust was a proof to him how poor had been his success.

‘Hawkwell of all people!’ That she should actually be about to be made mistress of his old home, this was indeed hard to bear.

As he made his way through the throng, heedless of its presence as I have said, and quite ignoring, at all events, its individual components, a red parasol is thrust forward to touch him on the arm.

‘What! are you going to cut me, Mr. Charters?’ says Lady Gulliver, who was an old friend of his family. ‘You never come near me, and I hardly even know your address. They tell me you are preparing a tremendous surprise for us all at the Academy, and have no time to see anybody, and so I

console myself ; but I am not going to be cut in this way. . Are you coming to my dance this evening ? I hope so ! Not had a card ? I dare say not ; you don't deserve one, but you'll come, I hope, all the same.'

And Cheriton said that he would come, and strode homewards, resolving that he would plunge into the world thus open to him, for a time at all events, and learn what truth there was in these rumours of Lucy's engagement.

I fear he was not of a very even and philosophic frame of mind by the time he reached Great Rainbow Street. He had been asking himself as he came along how he could have been so soft and weak as to allow this pushing fellow, Hawkwell, to carry off the prize unchallenged by any effort of his own to the contrary ; whether, after all, his ancient name and undoubted blood were not things that he might have put forward as being quite as desirable and as worthy of consideration as the mere *£ s. d.* of this successful speculator ; and, in fact, had been lashing himself into a frame of mind quite foreign to the patience which he had ordained for observance.

Perhaps in forbidding himself to dream too much, to long too much for Lucy, he had not contemplated the possibility of her meantime ceasing to think of himself. Perhaps unconsciously he had allowed himself to hope that her constancy would be equal to awaiting the time when success in his art would triumph over the failings of his exchequer. Certainly in hearing of what all along he might have regarded as a probable contingency, he was stung with a disappointment quite inconsistent with his Stoic professions to himself.

He threw off his frock coat when he got back into his studio, and lighting the consolatory pipe, devoted himself vigorously to working at his picture, making up as well as he could for the wasted hours of the morning; but the work which he put into it was of an exceedingly indifferent description, and formed quite a contrast to that which had been effected under conditions of greater mental composure.

Friends dropped in on him presently. An unsuccessful artist first, then a needy struggler in the paths of literature—men

whom he had taught himself to regard hitherto as better worth knowing, better worth listening to, than less intellectually gifted persons of higher social status—men of whose ultimate success he was sanguine, and whose more pressing needs his purse had now and then been opened to relieve. They were not of high birth perhaps, and indeed here and there some trait to the contrary would slightly jar on Charter's more refined sense, but he cared little for that; they belonged, so he would remind himself, to the aristocracy of talent, and he had been both proud and contented in their acquaintance. On this particular evening they bored him, did these men of talent. He was more than usually conscious of their plebeian proclivities, and was not sorry when they took their departure.

'There's a deal of clap-trap after all in the talk about the aristocracy of intellect and so forth,' he said to himself, as he regarded his picture in solitude, not unconscious of the strictures his guests had passed upon it. 'I believe I've made a mistake after all in following art as a profession,' he mused

somewhat discontentedly. 'The world only cares how much money a fellow has nowadays, and isn't very particular either how he gets it. If I had been in the City now, coining money like this fellow Hawkwell, I might not have liked the work perhaps, but I should have had a better chance of holding my own position, as the world goes nowadays, than I have, buried amongst these queer fish in Marylebone.'

In racing parlance, it perhaps might be said that Mr. Cheriton Charters had bolted off the course.

END OF VOL. I.

